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COLLECTION
IN · HONOR · OF · HIS · NINETIETH · BIRTHDAY
MARCH 20TH 1924
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HARVARD · ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

MODERN

FRENCH LITERATURE

BY

BENJAMIN W. WELLS, PH.D. (HARV.)

BOSTON
ROBERTS BROTHERS
1896

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Pres. C. W. Eliot

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PREFACE.

If prefaces did not exist, it would surely be necessary to invent them. An author has always some confidence to make to a gentle reader, some shield that he would fain oppose to a captious critic. Of course his work will have to stand for itself; but the workman likes to tell what he has tried to do, and why and how he has tried to do it. So, first, my book is not meant for special students, who will naturally resort to those varied French sources from which I have directed little streams to fertilize and enrich what has remained in my notebooks and memory from the reading of many years. Nor are these essays intended primarily as an introduction to the study of French literature, but rather as a companion, and possibly a guide, to the better appreciation and enjoyment of those authors who mark progress or change in the evolution of literary ideals since the great Revolution. Until any book that is worth reading is seen in its true perspective, one will not draw from it its full measure of pleasure or profit. To give some clew to the books that are significant, whether as products or as causes of changed critical standards and æsthetic principles, is what is attempted in these chapters.

Outside of scholastic and professional circles, men who turn to French for enjoyment or as a subsidiary means of culture read almost wholly the works of this century; yet, so far as I know, the English attempts to trace the lines of the century's literary development in France are arid and perfunctory, while the French critics, admirable as they are, naturally assume much to be familiar for which a foreigner may grope in vain. No one can be more keenly aware than I how parlous a task it is to attempt systematic criticism of the present or near past in literature; but if we are to wait until the world has made up its mind about what it is reading to-day, it will then be reading something else, and our criticism will always lag superfluous in the development of taste; it will be useful to students, but caviare to the public. Is it not, then, worth while to take Grimm's words to heart, and to "have the courage to fail" rather than to leave the task unattempted? If the critic can be more helpful, he may be content to be less profound, original, or mature.

Three introductory chapters sketch the evolution of French literature till the close of the eighteenth century, that the reader may be reminded of those authors whose influence is still felt and of whom it belongs to the humane life to know. In the more detailed studies that follow, no mention is made of imitators or hack writers, however ephemerally popular, nor of any work that has not literary imagination and artistic form, in order that attention may be concentrated on those writers who stand for something, who mark progress

or change. In estimating their place and function, I have used freely the critical apparatus cited in the foot-notes, but I have never expressed a literary opinion that is not based on examination of the original work, though doubtless my position has been modified by the masters of French criticism, and, as I have used at times, notes made long since and for another purpose, it is possible that I have still unacknowledged debts, to avoid the possibility of which would involve what seems to me an undue sacrifice. Indeed, I should be willing in any case to forego the honor of an anxious originality, if by uniting the prismatic beams of French criticism into a white ray I could assist my readers to a clearer vision of the greatest epoch of one of the greatest literatures of the world.

It remains for me to express my grateful thanks to all who have aided me in this work, especially to my colleague, Professor William P. Trent, and to the officers of the Boston Public Library, whose generous aid and unfailing courtesy helped to make my book a possibility and my labor a pleasure.

BENJAMIN W. WELLS.

SEWANEE, TENNESSEE,
February 18, 1896.

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MODERN FRENCH LITERATURE.

CHAPTER I.

MIDDLE AGE AND RENASCENCE.

Books began to be written in French somewhat later than in English or German, because Latin survived longer in Gaul as the language of the cultured. The English and the Germans had no classical past to check and discourage efforts in what might seem a degraded dialect; and so, long after Charlemagne had made his collection of heroic Teutonic ballads, long after English hearts had thrilled to the story of Beowulf, French was still an unwritten language, in which the first stammerings of literary expression had yet to be heard, though even in the middle of the seventh century we read that a bishop of Noyon was chosen "because he understood both Teutonic and Romance," which would show that many that spoke either tongue understood no other.

Romance is the indefinite designation of many dialects. What survived in literature is essentially Low Latin with greatly maimed inflections, much confusion of vowels and elision of consonants. A few words recall the Celtic that the Latin had almost wholly displaced in the first century of our era; many more words were retained from their own mother tongue by the

conquering Franks. The first to put this new growth to literary use were, naturally, the clergy. The cloisters furnished the leisure; the needs of the missionaries and devotees, the motive. Already in the tenth century there were legends of the saints and bits of Bible story that have much simple beauty; and when once this fountain-head had been opened, it poured a rich and constant stream that has not ceased to flow for eight centuries. There are no such dreary wastes in French literature as those that separate Chaucer from Spenser, or Luther from Lessing. There is hardly a generation since the "Chanson de Roland" that has not had some work of real excellence to show; and all this literature, even the oldest, has been readily and easily intelligible. No educated Frenchman has ever needed a long preparation to assimilate the literary content of the "Song of Roland," and so early French literature has had more direct influence on the culture of the nineteenth century than early English has had. Surely no predecessor of Shakspere is so present in the minds of modern writers as Rabelais or Montaigne. To indicate as briefly as possible the relation of these early centuries to our own, is my purpose in this chapter.

The first popular literature was metrical, both for the convenience of the reciter who had to memorize it, and also to admit of a musical accompaniment. And since the minstrel depended on the interest he could evoke, he naturally chose the themes that attracted those who had most to give, and were likely to be most lavish in the giving. These were the knights and nobles; and the deeds of their chivalrous ancestors were the subjects that most effectually touched their pride and loosed their purse-strings. When he was the guest of a cloister, the singer might recount the Passion of

our Lord, of Saint Eulalie, or of Saint Alexis, but in the castle his welcome depended on the local character of his repertory. Hence the groups of "Chansons de geste" (Family Songs) that, when compiled and joined to one another with more or less skill, made up the greater part of the literature of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and continued to be re-edited and further extended in the thirteenth. Such "Chansons" naturally served as a model for those who had recent history to record; and some of these rhymed chronicles — Wace's "Roman de Rou," for instance — have a sort of literary interest.

About a hundred of these epic songs have survived the rack of time. The most famous of them all is the story of Roland's death at Roncesvalles (August 15, 778), which indeed no other *chanson* resembles or approaches in naïve realism and rugged beauty.[1] All of them are written in couplets of careful structure, united by assonance or vowel rhyme. The hero is usually, as in Roland's case, connected with Charlemagne, and with the struggles of Christians and infidels; but there is always fighting of some kind, and women play a very subordinate part. Love is overlaid by the stronger emotions of faith and patriotism in the "Song of Roland," and by the mere love of brawling in some of the inferior "Chansons," which differ greatly in this from the freer inventions that were gradually developed from them as literature and culture progressed. Legends of the British King Arthur had attracted the Normans in England, and were by them brought to France, where most of them had been versified before the end of the twelfth cen-

[1] Cp. Lanson, Littérature française, p. 26. Cited hereafter as Lanson.

tury, mainly by Chrestien de Troyes, to whom, in turn, England owes the "Morte d'Arthur," and Germany the epics of Hartmann, Wolfram, and Gottfried.

These romances, when contrasted with the "Chansons," show a growing culture and refinement, a more developed courtesy, and so a more prominent position for women, who seem already hedged with some chivalrous divinity. Idealization shows itself also in the religious background, which in the grail saga becomes very prominent and mystical. Then, too, the form shows more refinement. Assonance is succeeded by true rhyme. But what is most significant is the appeal to a wider public. Tradespeople and bourgeois begin to find a place in the stories, — characters that would have had no interest for the public of the "Chansons," to whom no minstrel would have ventured to introduce them.

The "Chansons de geste" had been national, if not local, in tone, and the romances were essentially in accord with the mediæval spirit; the next stage of development, however, was more purely artificial. Thirst for novelty, aided by the demands of the monastic schools, led to translations and adaptations of classical subjects, especially the legends of Alexander, to one of which in twelve-syllable lines we owe the alexandrine verse that was destined to play a great part in the French prosody of many following centuries. Nature, too, begins to interest; and "Bestiaries," true "fairy tales of science," such as that age knew, tell of the strange virtues and habits of animals, while other didactic poems recount similar traits of plants and stones. Lyric poetry now begins to be cultivated by the aristocracy. Troubadours in the south and Trouvères in the north write "Romances" and "Pastou-

relles," dealing always with ladies and shepherdesses, nearly always with love, usually of a rather facile character. Meanwhile the true, unsanctified *esprit gaulois* was revealing itself in "Fabliaux," — short stories in verse, frankly coarse, and often brutal, usually comic and satirical, often cynically skeptical of virtue and with touches of what modern Frenchmen call *blague*. These tales were written by men, and they are not tender to feminine foibles. No doubt they give too dark a picture of the national morals; but they are essentially realistic stories of every-day life, in strong contrast with the artificial "Pastourelles." They were to the middle and lower classes as natural as the "Chansons de geste" to the knights. Hence they had in them fruitful seeds of life, and exercised a great and lasting influence. They were so true to unspiritualized human nature that they needed little to adapt them to any age or environment. So the "Fabliaux" have been a storehouse whence the novelists and dramatists of later times have drawn some of their best material. The debt of Boccaccio, of De la Salle, of Chaucer, Shakspere, and Molière to the old French "Fabliaux" is a striking witness to the truth which all literary history teaches, that "one touch of nature makes the whole world kin."

From the "Fabliaux" to the drama might seem a natural transition, for many of them were in dialogue. But here the initiative came from the effort of the clergy to make the Scripture story more real to the unlettered multitude than painting or sculpture could have done. "Miracle Plays" were already acted in French before the close of the twelfth century; but they have hardly a trace of literary merit, such as would entitle them to rank with the epics and lyrics

of the time. The thirteenth century, however, was to produce in all these fields the best that mediæval literature has to offer, here as in Germany; and it is interesting to note that in both countries this remarkable age was followed by a stationary if not retrogressive one.

Narrative verse in the thirteenth century, though abundant, shows little invention of new subjects. The tales of chivalrous adventure develop the old themes, with classical reminiscences in the spirit of free fancy and romantic fiction, with less energy but more grace and beauty. And beside this survival there rises the prose tale, drawing its inspiration through Greece by the attrition of the Crusades, as well as from the Latin and the older French epics, which it first equals and then surpasses both in bulk and interest. This indicates that while there was still an audience for the minstrel, a reading public was growing that would presently make him superfluous as a narrator and change him to a singer of songs.

There is a pretence of didactic purpose in most of the translated tales of the "Gesta Romanorum" and in the oriental "Seven Wise Masters;" but original didactic writing is usually in versified fables, in Aesop's manner; and in the hands of Marie de France these attain at the outset a remarkable grace and pathos, though the best work of this genial lady is in the *lais*, — short narrative lyrics, perhaps the most original poems of the century. The songs of Thibaut of Champagne are also very delicate and beautiful. Both poets belong to the high aristocracy and to the earlier half of the century, and their numerous imitators were thoroughly aristocratic both in their lives and work. The close of the century shows, however,

a marked shifting of the centre of production. Its chief authors, Rutebœuf and Adam de la Halle, belong, by birth and instinct, to the people, and give a distinctly democratic tone to the drama and to social and political satire.

The former is a typical Parisian bourgeois of the period, whom poverty compelled to turn his hand to hack-work of almost every kind, — panegyrics, lives of saints and miracle plays, *fabliaux*, and crusading songs, — but who avenged himself in days of comparative ease by satirical attacks on his taskmasters, chiefly the clergy and the monks. Some of these, especially the autobiographical "Marriage" and "Complaint," have still pungency enough to insure their life. But while Rutebœuf was advancing literature on various lines, his contemporary, Adam de la Halle, was so broadening the French drama that he almost seems its creator. He carried it beyond the religious sphere. He took both his scenes and his characters from the life of his own day and of his native Arras, and so "Le Jeu de la feuillée" (c. 1262) is the first French comedy of manners. Nor was this his only happy hit. In "Robin and Marion" he was first to turn the "Pastourelle" into light opera. The invention of these two *genres* make the century memorable in French dramatic history, though the plays themselves may seem jejune enough to a modern reader.

Meantime the fable, under the same democratic impulse, had developed from the apologue to the *épopée* in "Renard the Fox," whose protean forms attest its popularity throughout the Middle Ages.[1] Here are told, with obvious sympathy, the tricks by which

[1] The original source seems to have been Flanders. See Lanson, p. 89.

the Fox outwits the authority of the Lion, the strength of the Bear, and the envy of lesser enemies. It thus lends itself easily to the freest social and political satire, of which the moral basis, like that of the "Fabliaux," is cynical skepticism that mocks honor, duty, loyalty, and has unqualified admiration for worldly shrewdness. The scheme admitted an indefinite addition of new episodes, until at last this product of many authors and several generations reached the huge bulk of thirty thousand lines, and seemed likely to die of its own hypertrophy, even while eager imitators were composing new poems on its model.

The obvious danger of satirical allegory is artificial elaboration that makes it both unintelligible and wearisome. This is the fault of "Renard," and in a still greater degree of the "Romance of the Rose," — a more brilliant poem of nearly equal length, in which the Middle Ages found an exhaustless mine of misogynist irony. The wit is of the keenest, but the allegory is too fine spun; and delightful as the poem is in parts, few will have the patience to unravel its tangled plot, in this age that cannot digest the "Faerie Queene." But in its day its fame was very great; it claimed a translation from Chaucer, and some knowledge of its character belongs even to general literary culture.

"The Romance of the Rose" is not a homogeneous work. Guillaume de Loris began it in the aristocratic part of the century; Jean de Meung finished it in the wholly different democratic spirit that marked Adam and Rutebœuf. The former planned a scholarly allegory of the Rose of beauty guarded by the virtues from the vices and from the Lover, whom some assist and others hinder in his effort to pluck and bear her from

the well-defended garden. Guillaume is often truly poetic and occasionally realistic, yet there is small trace in these pretty conceits of anything but serious moralizing. But when Jean took up the parable, in a continuation some four times the length of the original, he maintained, indeed, the essential thread of the allegory, but allowed himself the freest scope for the display of a varied reading and wide learning, and for satirical digressions that enter nearly every field of what was then current in science and speculation, in philosophy, physics, and theology. These give the poem its chief interest to-day, though to the student of mediæval manners it offers pictures that would be sought in vain elsewhere, and in its peculiar vein it has probably never been equalled. Jean de Meung was the first popularizer of rationalism, of Nature as the guide of life. He is the true predecessor of Rabelais, of Montaigne, and of Voltaire; and though he never ceased to imagine himself a devout Catholic, he is essentially Protestant at heart. Nature, to him, is the source of beauty; to live according to Nature is true morality. If he appears sometimes crude and even cynical in his judgments of those who seem most to contradict Nature, the monks and women, he is in the main a severe moralist; and though his work is a strange and ill-ordered medley, he is surely the most original thinker who wrote in French before the Renaissance.

The historical prose of the thirteenth century is probably more read than any of its purely literary productions, perhaps because both Villehardouin at the beginning and Joinville at the close of this period were closer students of real life than the poets. Villehardouin writes what might pass for a prose *chanson de*

geste if it were not known to be the account of a sober eyewitness of the Fourth Crusade, or, as he more justly calls it, of the Conquest of Constantinople,— for Christians, not Saracens, were its victims. No account of this mad adventure could lack a spice of romance; but Villehardouin put into it all the childlike naïveté of his time, all the energy of a man of action, all the piety of the ages of faith, all the enthusiasm that participation in a great task could inspire in a generous soul. Thus his Chronicle, as Saintsbury has said, gives a better idea of chivalry and feudalism at their best, than any other single work. It mirrors the life of the Middle Ages, as the " Romance of the Rose " does its thought. It has much of the charm of Froissart, and will never seem old so long as hearts are young.

During the century others continued the tradition, though they did not attain the excellence of the Crusader, and toward its close the monks of St. Denis began to compile their official history in French; but that was not literature. On the other hand, Joinville's biography of his friend and master, Louis IX. the Saint, has a peculiar grace and charm that six centuries have not made to fade. Louis died in 1270, but Joinville wrote a generation later in advanced old age. The century that separates him from Villehardouin was, as we have seen, one of disillusionment; sentiment was yielding to satire, and this was reflected in history as it had been in the epic and lyric poetry. Joinville is more reflective, more inquisitive too. He is a little skeptical about the merit of fighting for fighting's sake, and has his doubts about the value of knight-errantry. There is a great deal of keen though playful satire in the anecdotes that he recalls of the good king. It seems as though the same moral lassitude which in

Germany had followed the collapse of Frederic II.'s efforts for the emancipation of the human mind, the discouraged consciousness of the failure of the Crusades, and the growing weight of the ecclesiastical yoke, had here the same effect that it was having in the Empire, driving men to a critical, questioning spirit, to thoughts they were fain to veil in allegory and satire. And Joinville's work is interesting also from a rhetorical side. In him French prose proved its fitness for literary use. It was no longer an experiment, and it is essentially on the lines of his style that it grew and perfected itself.

Indeed, so long as the mediæval spirit continued, so long as education and especially classical culture was confined to the few, till the minds of men were enlarged and their horizons broadened, no radical change could be expected in literature. The French had already expressed their tender feelings in lyrics, their heroic aspirations in *chansons*, their life in the chronicles, their social views in satires. They were restless, questioning, expectant. Under these conditions an arrested literary development is almost inevitable. There might be no decline. Good work might continue to be done on the old lines; but presently the disillusionment spread and deepened. They felt that the old social system was cracking. It took no prophet to see that feudalism was doomed. But a new literature could arise only with a new enthusiasm; and that enthusiasm came after two centuries of expectation from the inspiring breath of Italian culture and the classical Renaissance.

In poetry this intervening period counts the notable names of Charles d'Orléans and François Villon[1] in

[1] Orléans, b. 1391, d. 1465. Villon, b. 1431, d. about 1463.

a numerous company, whose ingenuity was exercised less over matter than form. It has been said that "their poetry was all technique, and all their technique was difficulty." They invented a great number of metrical arrangements, more or less artificial, such as the *ballade*, with its equivocal and retrograde variations, the *rondeau, rondel, triolet, virelay*, and the *chanson royal*,[1] which some English poets are exercising their skill to imitate to-day, so that these men enjoy a sort of esoteric cult and some real revival of popularity. For no one can read D'Orléans' graceful, nonchalant verses without delight, though their ethical value is of the slightest, and the fickle muse surely deserts him if ever he presumes to be serious. Bitter experience of the uncertainties of politics had made him pay for the honor of a high command at Azincourt with a long imprisonment in England, whence he returned a devoted disciple of the god *Nonchaloir*, and felt no more pressing duty than to set up a poetic court at Blois, where the best talent of the age was soon assembled. As "an idle singer of an empty day," he had quite peculiar gifts. His favorite subjects are the changing seasons and light-hearted lover's fancies, with counsels against melancholy and care, and exhortations to friendship and good-humor. D'Orléans is never great, but he is nearly always healthy and cheerful.

The Parisian Villon strikes a deeper note. He was a greater and a more original poet, though a less worthy man. Poor as Rutebœuf, he was even more of a reckless vagabond; and his best work, like his predecessor's, was in satires, — his "Testaments," in which he made mock bequests to various friends and enemies, with autobiographical details and allusions that are

[1] These metrical forms are briefly described in Lanson, p. 142, note.

interesting whenever they happen to be still intelligible. The chief attraction of Villon to-day, however, is the short poems interspersed in these long satires, some of which bid fair to maintain their place among the best lyrics of the world. The "Ballad of the Ladies of Long-Ago," with its refrain, "But where are last year's snows," [1] is familiar to all lovers of poetry. Almost as famous is the "Epitaph in the form of a Ballad which Villon wrote for himself and his Companions when expecting to be hung with them." In this poem of death there is an antinomy of grim humor and naïve pathos that can hardly be excelled. But though in our own day Villon has been called "the first French writer who is frankly and completely modern," he will always be the poet of the few, the poets' poet, and "caviare to the general." After his death French poetry grew steadily more artificial, endeavoring to atone by self-imposed restraints for the lack of genius to rise above them, precisely as the Mastersingers were doing in contemporary Germany, and with much the same result.

Meantime, in the drama, the brilliant innovations of Adam de la Halle remained unfruitful for a time, while the Miracle Play was developing into the Mystery, where a freer use of allegory and mythology fostered originality and encouraged associations of actors independent of the clergy, or at least apart from them. Such companies were quicker to anticipate or respond to popular demands; and in the fifteenth century they presented not only the "Fall of Troy," but the very recent siege of Orleans, and the national heroine Joan of Arc, whose ashes were hardly cold. But the *esprit gaulois* has

[1] Mais où sont les neiges d'antan (Ballade des dames du temps jadis).

a natural affinity for comedy, and this century revived also Adam's happy inspiration in its moral allegories, *farces*, and *soties*. The first are the most artificial, and their vogue may well seem remarkable to a modern reader. "La Condemnation du banquet" is perhaps the best, yet it is but a wearisome girding at "Gluttony," who has for his interlocutors such *dramatis personæ* as "Dinner," "Supper," "Pastime," "Good-Company," "I-Drink-to-You," as well as various diseases and medical appliances, and a chorus to obtrude the obvious moral. The *soties* and *farces* are far more interesting. Some of them are comic monologues, and occasionally they look like parodies on the sermons of the time, which themselves are often hardly more than parodies, as one may see in the famous discourses of the Viennese Abraham a Sancta-Clara. But the larger part are realistic scenes of middle and low life, full of action and often of brutal buffoonery such as would appeal to the not very delicate taste of the populace. Their spirit, like that of the older *fabliaux*, is one of social distrust, of shrewdness and trickery. Charity and gentleness are mocked, astuteness is admired. Each man lives in dread of being duped by his neighbor. But we have a Frenchman's testimony that this is "the lower type of the French nature in its pure vulgarity."[1]

Some of these little farces and jests are so short that they seem meant to precede or follow a more serious performance. Others are long enough for independent production, and have no small comic verve. "Le Cuvier," for instance, shows as much dramatic spirit as the best of the old *fabliaux*. A yet more noted mediæval farce is the "Maître Pathelin" (1470),

[1] Lanson, p. 214.

which, in the seventeenth century, was worked over into a regular comedy that owed its success almost wholly to the *vis comica* of the original; and two sequels in the fifteenth century attest its popularity without equalling its merits.

All of these plays were written in verse, chiefly for the benefit of the actors who memorized them, but also in deference to tradition. Except in outward form, however, they are essentially prosaic, and must have gained little but monotony from their couplets and long succession of octosyllabic lines. Yet the force of this custom has continued almost to our own day, though the suppler alexandrine has given some measure of relief to comedy and added stateliness to the classic tragedy.

The number of farces that remain is very great, and doubtless as many have perished. With them comedy is fairly launched, and has never since ceased to be one of the most popular and important forms of French literature. Meantime the prose that would have been in place here, takes in Froissart complete possession of the historical field, where Joinville had won only toleration. This courtier and diplomat of the later fourteenth century (1337–1410), who witnessed much of the Hundred Years' War, and busily inquired of all he did not see, was able to draw a picture of the conflict between France and England that became at once immensely popular, and has continued to delight boyhood and old age ever since for its vivid picturesqueness of description and its enthusiastic chivalry of sentiment. Froissart is not a meticulously accurate historian, still less a social philosopher; but for a battle, or a pageant, or a tragic scene like the surrender of Calais, it will be hard to match him in French

or, indeed, in any literature. None ever equalled his brilliant and sympathetic picture of chivalry, with all its high-hearted ideals and all its disdain of the mass of humanity. For Froissart the common people hardly exist. But the times were even then changing, and a keen though untrained interest in the condition of the masses is attested by the minute curiosity of Juvenal des Ursins and Jean de Troyes, who wrote, somewhat later than Froissart, the former of the mad Charles VI., the latter of the shrewd diplomat Louis XI. and his scandalous court, that were to furnish to Philippe de Commynes the subject of the Memoirs by which he inaugurated diplomatic history.

But perhaps the most important contributor to the literary prose of this century was Antoine de la Salle, author of the graceful "Petit Jean de Saintré," of the biting "Quinze joies du mariage," and of the brilliant "Cent nouvelles nouvelles." "Petit Jean" is a pretty story of chivalrous love, a pure bit of romantic imagination; for ere this Louis XI. had made chivalry a thing of the past in France. The "Fifteen Joys," as its name implies, is a satire on women, as bright and as unjust as the "Romance of the Rose," but, unlike that famous poem, of far more than antiquarian interest, for it is still popular in cheap editions on the Paris book-stalls. Each of the "Joys" tells of some ill-assorted match, and each chapter ends with the misery that will come of it to the husband who "shall end miserably his days." The poor fellow is either led by the nose, or plundered of his goods, or made a laughing-stock to his friends. Some of the character-sketches are very lively and dramatic in form, and they are well worth reading, in spite of their archaic flavor, as specimens of early Renaissance literature and wit.

But Antoine de la Salle's great work is the "Cent nouvelles nouvelles," — a collection of tales gathered, it was said, from the lips of Prince Louis and his courtiers while he was in Burgundy under the protection of Duke Philippe, another lover of the *esprit gaulois*. But neither the future Louis XI. nor his courtiers were the inventors of the best of these tales, many of them quite too good to be new. They are drawn in part from old *fabliaux*, in part from Italian and Latin collections. But, as with Chaucer and Shakspere, it is not in the substance but in the treatment that De la Salle's individuality lies, and here his merit is very great. There had been good naïve prose in Villehardouin, in Joinville, and in Froissart, but De la Salle is the first prose artist who takes an interest in his art. His work shows growing artistic sense and power. Some of the "Hundred New Tales" are really polished, and it added to their effect that they appealed to a much wider circle than any other form of writing would have done. If at times they have a frankness of speech that does not accord with squeamish manners, their humor on the whole is sound and healthy, and nearly always true to human nature, superior in this regard to Boccaccio's "Decamerone," though yielding of course to that masterpiece in grace of style. It may be remarked that De la Salle's efforts for French prose were ably seconded by the homilists of the time, whose sermons reached another class, and so carried the same seed to other fields.

And now we are on the eve of that wonderful and cardinal epoch in the history of the French and indeed of the European mind, the Renaissance.[1] That all

[1] The remainder of this chapter has appeared in "The Sewanee Review" for February, 1896.

literature, and indeed all forms of national life, are processes of evolution, is a truth now almost universally recognized among critics worthy of the name; but there are periods when external influences seem to a superficial observer to interrupt the continuity of development, when changes are more rapid and more radical than at others; and from this point of view the sixteenth century is absolutely unique in French literature. For however varied the expression of that age may be, protestant, pagan, humanistic, there is in it no place and no representative for the manner or the matter of mediæval literature. Calvin, Rabelais, and Ronsard drew all of them their inspiration from antiquity, all of them were practically ready to make a *tabula rasa* of the centuries that separate Augustine from Boccaccio, but each went to antiquity with a different mind, and drew from it a different lesson. Calvin seeks primitive Christianity; Rabelais Greek naturalism; Montaigne the skeptical and practical realism of Rome; Ronsard turns with a passionate longing to the sun of classic art.

So we have to follow out, in this century and in those that succeed, three main tendencies, not indeed without subdivisions and intertwinings, for literary psychology is not a geometric science, and a strict classification attains clearness only by inaccuracy; but still as elements sufficiently distinct from one another to make it profitable to ask in every case in what proportion they enter into each great writer's work and genius. There is first the temper that recoils from the abuses of the Church and from what it regards as the accretions of mediæval ethics, and seeks to restore from the Bible, and the Fathers that suit their purpose, a "primitive Christianity" to their mind. These are

the Protestants, the Huguenots, sober, serious, earnest, religious men, whom France will miss from her intellectual and still more from her moral life, when she has persecuted and banished them. Uncomfortable, intransigent, morose sometimes and bitter like our own Puritans, but, after all, the moral salt of the earth, whom perhaps one would not like to be one's self, but whom one is quite proud to have had for an ancestor. Then there are the Gallios, — men who see that there is something rotten in the Church of their fathers, but do not think that they were born to set it right; men who love ease, beauty, grace, and have a sort of dilettante joy of life. These are the humanists, who toy with Theocritus and Horace, are fascinated with Anacreon, and have a more distant admiration for the truly popular epic of Homer than for the courtly epic of Virgil, but who see in it all a play of fancy, not a philosophy of life. And finally there are the neo-pagans, who find in the bankruptcy of mediævalism the bankruptcy of Christianity, who think to have done at once with Saint Augustine and with Saint Thomas Aquinas, whose ambition is a naïve hedonism more easy to their age than to ours, who find the old Church more tolerant than the new, and so remain as a rule nominally Catholic, and are seldom called upon to suffer more than temporary inconvenience for their thinly masked heresies.

The causes of this sudden outburst of independent thought were numerous, and have been often indicated. The discovery of America, and, still more, the discovery of the solar system, had changed man's point of view of his place in Nature. As Faguet[1] observes, "The narrow world of the middle ages, with its sky

[1] Seizième siècle, Avant-propos, p. vii.

very low and its God very close, disappeared almost suddenly. We were living in a little low house, where we were watched from the top of a neighboring tower by a severe and good master, who had given us his law, followed us with his eyes, sent us frequent messengers, protected us, punished us, and held us always in his hand. And suddenly we were living in an out-of-the-way corner of the immense universe. Heaven withdrew into measureless space, and God fled into infinity." That knowledge was indeed too wonderful for that generation. Many lost for a time the feeling of the personality of deity. The science of God might be exalted, clarified, but the love of God grew cold, and men of philosophic mind felt nearer to the school of Athens than to the school of Alexandria or of Hippo, far nearer than to the Angelic or to the Mystic Doctor.

It is a commonplace to connect the renaissance with the invention of printing and the spread of classical learning, but even here there is perhaps some misapprehension. Many of the classics had been known and used by literary men habitually and constantly since the age of Bede. The "Romance of the Rose" reeks with antiquity of a certain kind; Villon has even traces of the classic lyric spirit. Of course, when manuscripts of ancient authors were printed, they were more widely read. But the point of importance is that they were read in a new spirit and seen in a wholly new light. For just at the time when printing was invented, and the inventors looked about them for books to print, it happened that the national literature was at a low ebb, having indeed been steadily degenerating since the thirteenth century in France as in Germany, while at the same time it chanced that, through the fall of Constantinople and other external

causes, a vast number of classical manuscripts became for the first time available. Hence the books first multiplied — with some natural exceptions, such as the "Bible" and the "Imitation of Christ" — were the classics; and these books thus obtained a vantage ground in the minds of the reading public that they could hardly have attained had they been obliged to contest the favor of the once popular writers of the thirteenth century, whom time and the widening of the human mind had now crowded from view. This, again, has been admirably expressed by Faguet: "On one side were the classics and the writings of the sixteenth century, printed, portable, legible, inconceivably multiplied; on the other side the mediæval books, manuscripts, hard to handle, to take in, to read, or to find. So printing gradually suppressed the middle ages, and by presenting antiquity and the sixteenth century to eye and mind under the same forms, in the same styles and types, and as it were in the same language, it expressed and asserted emphatically that continuation of antiquity by the sixteenth century that was dimly in all minds, and cast, in like measure, the middle ages into the shade as though they had not been."[1] Herein lies the significance of the word "renaissance," — a new birth of an old life after ages of quiescence which men despise and make haste to forget, almost as much repelled by their own tradition as they are attracted to a foreign past. It was a state of mind unique in history, and full of the germs of political, social, and literary revolution.

The three elements — pagan, humanistic, and protestant — manifest themselves throughout Europe, but with different degrees and results. In Germany the renas-

[1] Faguet, Seizième siècle, x.

cence is ethical, religious. The voice of the humanists is feeble and soon lost in domestic strife, while the pagan element was never deeply rooted among them. Here, therefore, the classical renaissance is deferred for more than three centuries, to spring, like a fully armed Pallas, from the brain of Lessing, and to be the presiding genius of the ideal humanist, Goethe. In England, too, the religious side predominates, but always mingled with humanism; while in the Italy of Boccaccio and the France of Ronsard the movement is more literary, artistic, and at most crypto-pagan, except for the Huguenots, whose spirit in literature hardly extends beyond Calvin and D'Aubigné. Here the normal state of mind is humanistic, eclectic, "with a Christian soul and a pagan art," — an illogical compromise that reaches its supreme expression in Chateaubriand, though it can be seen almost everywhere and always in France, as for instance in Boileau's exclusion of Christian mysteries from the domain of poetry, and in the resulting impersonality of the whole literature of the classic school. The pagan element in the renaissance, on the contrary, has predominated only during a part of the eighteenth century, though it is fundamentally the spirit of Rabelais, of Montaigne, of La Fontaine and of Molière. This spirit is opposed equally to Catholicism and to Protestantism, while the humanists content themselves with reprobating the latter and its congener, Jansenism. The triumph of the pagan renaissance in the age of Voltaire was, however, short. The spirit of the encyclopædists yielded to that of the "Genius of Christianity," while in our own century the pagan tradition has in it an element of Jansenism, and the Reformers have become Free-Thinkers. Since the Romantic School

the mark of the period has been a varied individualism, so that the Spirit of the Time, when we seek its name, can answer only, "Legion, for we are many."

If now we return to the sixteenth century and seek in it the expression of these various tendencies, we shall find that this age of singular activity owes little to its immediate predecessor, save a style to which De la Salle had given a graceful suppleness and the homilists an oratorical flow. In every kind of literary art this century advances by leaps, spurred to activity first and most by the example of the Italian renaissance, for the ambition of their kings had brought them into repeated and close though disastrous contact with that ancient home of art, but impelled also by the revival of learning at home, and by the religious ferment, which was spread by printing and the accompanying diffusion of primary knowledge, and grew, like yeast, by what it fed on. There is nothing to compare in the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries with the prose satire of the "Ménippée" or the barbed verses of D'Aubigné; nothing to match the lyrics of Marot, still less of Ronsard; nothing like the criticism of Du Bellay or the dignified drama of Jodelle; no such fiction as blossomed beneath the dainty fingers of Queen Marguerite; no such wit as Beroald's and Des Périers'; above all, nothing to match the stern force of Calvin, the marvellous well-spring of Rabelais' humor, or the novel charm of Montaigne's essays. Nor must we forget the numerous translations that now first betray a restless search for new inspirations. The drooping taste for idealized adventure receives a fillip from a version of "Amadis of Gaul," the great romance of Spanish chivalry. Amyot turns into prose that may still arouse admiration, "Daphnis and

Chloë," that exquisite pastoral of the Greek Longus, as well as Plutarch's lives of the great men of Greece and Rome, that became a repertory for the novelists and dramatists of the next century. It is clear already that we have to deal with a remarkable diversity of genius. Indeed this is, like our own, a century of literary independence, with few rules, save the "Do what thou wilt" of Rabelais' Abbey of Thelema, and no enduring literary schools or traditions. It was not till its very close that the ethical and artistic aspirations of the renaissance were chastened and united by Malherbe, who "joined with a somewhat heavy hand antique art to modern rationalism," and, though himself a little man, owes to greater followers the distinction of being first in the classical period.

The poetry of the century, with the exception of a portion, and that perhaps not the best, of D'Aubigné's verse, is humanistic, continuing with greater resources and greater zeal the study of classic art that was already an old tradition in France. But while the middle ages had sought their inspiration chiefly in the more accessible Latin writers, in Ovid and Boëthius, in Livy and the essays of Cicero, Marot, the first of the renaissance poets who need detain our attention, knew and valued Virgil, Martial, Lucian, and the pseudo-Musæus; while Ronsard, with his fellows of the Pleiad, seems often to have judged the value of an acquisition by its difficulty, prizing Pindar more than Homer, and finding his most genuine delight first in Petrarch, then in Anacreon.

Clement Marot (1497–1544) had the happy fortune to unite northern blood to southern birth, and to combine many of the virtues of each. In his ethics he was a sort of dilettante reformer, of the type that

gathered at the court of the broad-minded and tolerant Princess Marguerite, afterward Queen of Navarre, herself a lyric poet, whose "Marguerites" show a considerable development of that personal note which the Pleiad, Malherbe, and Boileau were to deaden in France till the rise of the Romantic School. Under her patronage Marot furthered religious disintegration by his translation of the Psalms, which was very popular, even after it was condemned by the Sorbonne as smacking of heresy. Here the subject lent him a dignity that his other work is apt to lack, being in the main pretty rather than beautiful, light rather than strong, graceful rather than grand. His great service to French verse is that he did for it what the "Cent nouvelles nouvelles" had already done for its prose. He restored naturalism and simplicity. For the artificial excess of ornament and allegory he substituted his native grace and delicacy.[1] He is now, and probably will always be, most read for his lighter work, — for his songs, epistles, epigrams, animal fables, and the nonsense verses, the "Coq-à-l'âne." And even in these fields he is chiefly known by a very few *pièces de résistance* of the reading-books and anthologies. All school-boys know "The Rat and the Lion," most will have read Marot's deliciously naïve begging letter to King Francis I. (Epist. 11 and 28); but to one who has read the whole body of his work, the songs, satirical or convivial, such as "Frère Lubin," "Dedans Paris," or "Au bon vieux temps," will seem more characteristic of his natural diversity, and give us a more human sympathy with one who was always a good fellow, and

[1] The instinct of beauty occasionally fails him, yet he falls but seldom into such crass naturalism as that of "Le Laid téton," a companion piece to Baudelaire's "Charogne."

always seemed so when it was not for his interest to cut a long face.

Marot's imitators were usually more serious, always less talented than he, though to one of them, Saint-Gélais, French verse owes the introduction of the Italian sonnet. The Calvinistic satirist, Agrippa d'Aubigné (1550–1630), though of a much later period, shared Marot's sympathies rather than those of the free-thinking Pleiad, of whom he is sometimes called a "rebellious" follower. His trenchant satires did much to establish the domination of the alexandrine verse that Ronsard had preached rather than practised. They were also the first worthy work in the manner of Juvenal that France has to show. But even before Marot's death a group of young talents had gathered at the Collège Coqueret, whose influence was to be temporarily greater and more lasting in some of its phases than that of any which had preceded them. This "Pleiad" of genius supplemented what was best in Marot's naturalism with a fuller measure of the classical spirit, and so set French literature, both in its substance, its form, and its language, in new paths, which those who afterward most blamed their early excesses were most zealous silently to follow. The Pleiad was first in France to preach and practise particular heed to the cadence of the single verse, while lyric poets before them had regarded the stanza as the unit in poetic composition. It was also first to reprove and regulate the once unbridled license of newly coined words and phrases, though even their liberal culture went farther in this than following generations were willing to follow. With delicate feeling they laid stress on the choice and place of words in poetic composition, and completed the discredit of an artificial

and rhetorical style against which Marot had already raised the standard of revolt. But while Marot had the tact to "choose the wheat and let the chaff be still" in the traditional forms, he introduced into literature no new blood. With Ronsard and his brothers of the Pleiad the case is different. They were conscious innovators; their advent could not have been anticipated, and is indeed almost a unique fact in literary history.

It was probably in 1541 that Pierre de Ronsard (1524–1585), then a travelled young soldier of eighteen, left his profession, and the promise of a brilliant career, for studious retirement at Paris and the prized instructions of Daurat, who presently began to gather about him a group of enthusiastic young scholars, such as might have been sought in vain elsewhere in France. Belleau and Baif had preceded Ronsard; Du Bellay he brought back from a journey to Poictiers; Jodelle and Pontus de Tyard soon joined them to complete their "brigade," — a name that their number, seven, led them to exchange for Pleiad, when, in 1549, the group first ventured to break their studious silence, and to proclaim their views and purposes in the "Défense et illustration de la langue française," ostensibly by Du Bellay, but really a joint manifesto of the school. The purpose of this famous pamphlet is to urge its readers who have entered the classical camp "to escape from the midst of the Greeks and through the ranks of the Romans, and to come back to the heart of their own well-beloved France," that they may bring with them from those foreign literatures what may be profitable to their own. Now, any man who reads widely in the writings of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries will find the conviction grow that French, as a vehicle of literary expression for the

renaissance mind, was in need of just that new blood that could be drawn from the school of Petrarch and from the revival of classical studies, the source whence Italy had already drawn its fuller life. The men of the Pleiad were no Chauvinists, but yet they were thoroughly national and patriotic in their aims, and quick to learn from their own errors, as well as from those of their erudite predecessors,[1] so that their last work is among their best. In them the humanism of the French renaissance reaches its fullest expression, while of the ethical and philosophic phase of the movement they have hardly a trace.

Typical of all, except Jodelle, is Ronsard; he alone is still generally read by cultured men, apart from special studies, and of him alone it is necessary to speak here. His literary life was a constant triumph. Almost from the outset, and until his death, he was easily first at court and in the popular esteem; and he held this place after his death, though in Desportes and less talented imitators among the classical decadents, the blood of the French muse began to run thin, till Malherbe gave a new life to Ronsard's revival of classic taste by infusing it with the rationalistic spirit.

Ronsard asserted his pre-eminence by his mastery of the language and of metre, and by a poetic imagination, without which the most skilful rhymester is only an artisan. In language he encouraged his readers to "a wise boldness in inventing new words, so long as they were moulded and fashioned on a pattern already recognized by the people." He might have said, with Dante, that language never constrained him to say what he would not; but he had often constrained language to say what it would not, though in this regard

[1] Especially Le Maire de Belges, Heroët, and Maurice Scève.

the sum of his offending does not exceed two hundred words. However the case may be now in academic France, Ronsard understood for his time exactly what it meant to have a mastery of his own tongue; and though perhaps he strained too much at foreign forms, neglecting the poetic worth that lay in the popular speech, yet in his prose as in his verse there was a vigor and a brilliancy that had not been equalled, and was not exceeded till the appearance of Montaigne's "Essays."

It is curious to note that this crystallization of modern prose which Ronsard inaugurated in France, had its parallels in the contemporary literatures of Germany, Spain, and England. In every case it was political unity that gave the first impulse and forced the dialects into subordination to the dominant speech of the court. Ronsard began for the French language very much what Luther accomplished for the German, and in prosody also he was an innovator and a reformer. He failed indeed to revive the Pindaric ode, the value of which for modern use he greatly exaggerated; but he restored the alexandrine to its place of honor, though he did not always follow his own teaching. He was also first to popularize the sonnet, and he introduced an endless variety of lyric stanzas, whose metres were as graceful as they were original. It is here that his best work is to be sought, in the groups called "Amours," "Gaietés," and in the later odes, rather than in the classical eclogues and odes, or in the unfinished epic, "La Franciade." Anthologies never fail to cite "Mignonne, allons voir si la rose," and the sonnet to Hélène beginning "Quand vous serez bien vieille;" and they seldom omit the "Drenched Cupid," — a subject borrowed from Anacreon, and

interesting because it admits a comparison with La Fontaine. But, charming as these are, it is only prescription that causes them to be so uniformly preferred to a score of others, filled with the peculiar naïveté and flavor of the renaissance that later centuries so seldom recover. "La petite colombelle" yields nothing in the comparison with Catullus that it naturally suggests; and "Cupid's School," borrowed from Bion, is treated in a way to put the creditor under obligations to his debtor. Then, too, there is "L'Alouette" (the Skylark), as characteristic of France and of his century as Shelley's is of England and of his. Ronsard is a poet in the fresh vigor of hope. He is not looking with the Englishman's forlorn hope from some Euganean hill for the "green isles that needs must be in the deep, wide sea of misery;" his Skylark is a charming bird to be enjoyed, not to be yearned for as the symbol of what she is not. There is hardly ever a morbid strain in his verses, for Ronsard at his best is the poet of a free and healthy naturalism. Hence the last half-century has been peculiarly favorable to a revival of his fame, which has betrayed some enthusiasts into an excessive admiration. He lacked clear æsthetic standards because he lacked intellectual independence; but the fact remains that no French poet before Victor Hugo is so much in sympathy with the spirit of our age as Ronsard, while at the same time no poet has a more cheerful note or a more needed message to this pessimistic generation.

Ronsard lived a happy, hopeful life, and the peaceful current of his declining years was crowned with the "honor, love, obedience, troops of friends," that should accompany it, and with a peaceful and holy death (December 27, 1585). A hopeful, healthy joy of life,

rarely crossed by a querulous cloud, remained with him, as with Goethe, to the end. Just so far as this temper has prevailed in it, French literature has been strong and helpful. Ronsard did more than any one man to form the literary language of France. It was his humanism, corrected, modified, and then ignored by Malherbe, that dominated the age of Louis XIV., though it was reserved for our own to restore to him his long neglected honor. "The classical spirit was formed in accord with him, without him, and apparently in opposition to him. He had it, he did not inspire it. He is the final type of it, and he is not its founder; he is its first date, and he is not its source. But that is no fault of his." [1]

In the drama the Pleiad, represented by Jodelle (1532–1573), was less original and more classical in tone. His "Cleopatra" is the first "regular" tragedy, the first that answers to the distorted conception he had formed of the Aristotelian unities, and his "Eugène" is the first "regular" comedy. Both were studied, as was all his work, more from the Latin than from the Greek; but, defective if not mistaken as was his critical conception, his ideas were so in accord with the French spirit on its good and its weak side, that they were industriously imitated, till at the close of the century (1599) Alexander Hardy began the rehabilitation of the national drama at the Hôtel de Bourgogne, till then still occupied by the mysteries of the Confraternity of the Passion.

The first noteworthy prose work of the sixteenth century, the "Memoirs" of Philippe de Commynes (1445–1511), belongs rather to the fifteenth; but as they were not published till 1524, his effect on the

[1] Faguet, Seizième siècle, 287.

literature of the time must be considered with that of the men of the early French renaissance. What strikes one most in the man's writing, as in his life, is his practical and modern common-sense. For the knight-errantry of Froissart he substitutes a diplomatic shrewdness and a wide curiosity that always follows the *what* with the *why*. Successively the servant of Charles the Bold, of Louis XI., and of Charles VIII., he guarded beneath his diplomacy the naïve faith of a man whose own experience is full of riddles that some sort of providence alone is able to solve; but he joins to this an equally naïve belief in shrewdness and a distrust of over-boldness in the affairs of the world. This undogmatic religiosity is a modern trait; so, too, is his curiosity, his democratic sympathies, and the natural restraint of his narrative that rarely passes beyond the limits of his immediate observation. Though himself little touched by the renaissance, his attitude toward the Church ranks him among the ancestors of the humanists, of whom indeed there is a long line reaching far back into the thirteenth century.

On the other hand, Calvin (1509–1564) represented the new spirit of intransigent reform, the attempted restoration of primitive Christianity. Trained both for theology and law, he joined in after life the doctor to the lawgiver, and became at once the Moses and the Aaron of the chosen people who left the flesh-pots of their French bondage to gather in the Genevan Canaan. With his teaching we have nothing to do here save to note its revolt against mediævalism; but the sober logic and classical polish of his style give him a very high place — if we regard form alone, the highest place — among the prose writers of his century.

It is sober sense enforced with a lapidarian clearness and precision, and therefore lacking somewhat in sympathy and imagination, bent on commanding rather than winning assent, on being understood rather than on being loved; here, too, "the style is the man," — stern, imperious, lofty, sincere, and sombre,[1] at once borne up and borne down by the all-pervading sense of the immanence of deity. But in the less competent hands of his imitators and successors his style inevitably degenerated to pedantic heaviness, though not until it had shown the unguessed powers of French for accurate exposition and subtle disputation.

But this century of renascence was distinguished no less and characterized much better by Rabelais, a remarkably keen and learned man, who spent his life in ridiculing with the most bitter satire what he still professed to believe. In his career, as in his work, there appears at first sight a constant vein of insincerity, a Mephistophelian spirit that sees the weak, the laughable, the ridiculous side of that which it holds dearest and holiest; but when work and life are more closely examined, Rabelais' spirit seems rather that of a profound philosopher who discerns the essential antinomy in all apprehension of human truth, so that he rises far above the mere mockery of Lucian or the diabolic ferocity of Swift. Traces of the same philosophic attitude can be found in Reuchlin, in Erasmus, and in other doctors of the Reformation, more learned than bold; but it is in France that this

[1] He tries occasionally to lighten his sermons with some metaphor from common life or even with vulgar dialect; but it is heavy fooling, and one feels that he shakes with awkward reluctance this cap and bells. See for instances, as well as for a keen study of Calvin's doctrine, Faguet, Seizième siècle, 127–197, and especially 192–193.

spirit can be most frequently and constantly noted, and the unchallenged leader of its representatives is François Rabelais (1495–1553), who is the most complete reflection of the too sanguine hopes of the pagan renaissance, of its serious aspirations, its over-hasty generalizations, and its joy of life.

Rabelais' satire is put into the form of a burlesque romance of adventures; but the form is a very thin disguise, and the thread of the narrative is of the slenderest. Throughout, his real interest is in destructive criticism of the political and social conditions of his time. His mind became constructive only when stirred by the worthlessness of mediæval education or by the abuses of decaying monasticism. The five books [1] of his great satire, which differ sufficiently from one another to be treated as separate works, appeared at various times between 1532 and 1564, when Rabelais had already been eleven years dead, and beyond the reach both of the just indignation and of the petty partisan hate that had pursued him through all his mature years. The first book bears the title "Gargantua," the others "Pantagruel;" and it is these that merit both the greatest admiration and the greatest reprobation. They are probably more studied to-day than any other work of the time. They are more witty, more caustic, more profoundly skeptical, more unscrupulous, and more unclean than any other book of that age. Indeed their coarseness is perhaps unparalleled in literature, and serves to hide both the author's wit and his political and pedagogic wisdom. That he should have begun life as a monk, while only

[1] Brunetière, Lanson, and other critics hold that the fifth book is a Huguenot pamphlet of another man and time, though posthumous papers of Rabelais were used in its composition.

his voluntary resignation prevented his ending it as a curate, illustrates the condition of the Church. In the interval between his leaving the Franciscan cloister of Fontenay le Conte and his entry into the presbytery of Meudon, he had been a Benedictine canon, a wandering scholar, a student of medicine, a scientist, physician to a diplomatic ambassador, and a voluntary exile.

Rabelais' book as a whole plays less part in literature than some of the characters in it. Gargantua, the giant father of Pantagruel, was generally recognized as typical of the good-humored, easy-going royalty of Francis I. Panurge, the companion and servant of Pantagruel, and more interesting than his master, embodies, as Saintsbury says, "a somewhat diseased intellectual refinement, and the absence of morality in the wide Aristotelian sense, with the presence of almost all other good qualities." "He is the principal triumph of Rabelais' character-drawing, and the most original, as well as the most puzzling, figure in the book. A coward, a drunkard, a lecher, a spiteful trickster, a spendthrift, but all the while infinitely amusing." [1] Opposed to him is the lusty animalism of Friar John, whose famous Abbey of Thelema, with its hedonistic motto, "Do what thou wilt," represents Rabelais' ideal of the "natural life," and the negation of all the restraints, moral and social, that he had learned to know and to hate in his monastic experience. A considerable part of the whole is occupied with Panurge's debate with himself and with Pantagruel as to whether he shall marry, his deliciously humorous recourse to all manner of authorities on

[1] Short History of French Literature, p. 186. Encyc. Brit., art. Rabelais, vol. xx. p. 196.

this matter of universal interest, and his final determination to consult the oracle of the "Dive Bouteille," which, after various adventures that offer scope to unbridled satire, finally gives the truly oracular response, "Trinq" (drink), as the solution of this and all other riddles of earth.

Of the serious parts of Rabelais' work the best are probably the scattered chapters on the education of Pantagruel, which show great originality and force, and a remarkable anticipation of the modern scientific spirit. But usually, however earnestly Rabelais may feel, his zealous optimism will find some grotesque mask for its expression. Of this comic vein the most striking feature is the unique and astounding vocabulary. He will pile up huge lists of cooks or of fantastic meats, of dances and of games, or he will take some noun and heap around it all conceivable adjectives, sometimes arraying them by the hundreds in columns.[1] The reader is led through as devious paths as those of Tristram Shandy's autobiography. There is a psychological analysis of wonderful keenness, a profusion of learning, a carnival of wit and imagination, the loftiest thoughts and the vilest fancies, all woven together into a mighty maze by "pantagruelism," — a militant faith in nature and instinct that by its robust humor and the solvent of its destructive satire becomes the extreme type of the pagan phase of the renaissance, the source of the eighteenth-century ethics and of modern French realism.

For independence of all ascetic restraint is Rabelais' philosophy of life, as it had been that of Jean de Meung, and was to be that of Voltaire. But its in-

[1] Books i. 22, v. 33, *bis*. Book iii. 26 has a list of 157 adjectives, and iii. 38 a list of 210.

consistency with mediæval Christianity seems more obvious to us than it did to him, who remained all his life nominally and doubtless sincerely a Catholic, though to him the yoke was certainly lighter than to most who make a Christian profession. Still there is nothing authentic in his work that can be construed into a direct attack on the faith. His position was like that of Erasmus. He was irreverent at times; but those who find an evidence of infidelity in this, or in his monumental filthiness of speech, are usually unacquainted with the common language of his contemporaries and predecessors of the ages of faith. Experience has shown that these things are less matters of morality than of taste and feeling, of age and race. Rabelais had more wit than the rest, and so did better what many tried to do. They have sunk in their mire to oblivion, but the impurity of Rabelais is like an unclean insect wrapped in amber. He must be judged by his time; and even at his coarsest it is always honest fun that inspires his rollicking laugh, never the prurient toying with voluptuousness and the sniggering of the eighteenth-century professors of the science of erotics.

The world-wisdom of Rabelais was much that of Goethe. Both were men of vast learning. Goethe had a wider and more delicate culture. Rabelais had, what Goethe greatly lacked, a deeper humor than any other Frenchman, and one of the richest the world has ever known. So the expression of their common thought is radically different; but both believed in the worth of life, and that that worth could be realized and enhanced by the freest development of the whole nature of man, unhampered by ascetic or other artificial trammels in ethics or philosophy. Yet it is the fate of the

humorist that his humor should mask his more serious thought; and Rabelais, while he has been admired by many and imitated by a few, has not had the influence on the thought or the writing of later generations that might have been anticipated from his great genius.

But while Rabelais was thus mocking the inconsistent follies of mankind, a group of talented men whom the open-hearted hospitality of Marguerite (1492–1549) had gathered at her court, was developing, by the introduction of tragic sympathy and artistic finish, the traditions of the prose *fabliaux* so well inaugurated in the "Cent nouvelles nouvelles."[1] The year 1558 was made memorable by the publication of the "Heptaméron," which sprang from the immediate circle of that royal lady, and by the "Joyeux devis" of Des Périers, the only frank skeptic of his time, whose "Cymbalum mundi" earned him a persecution that drove him at last to suicide (1544). His work hardly marks an advance, except in style, on De la Salle. The anecdotes are short, crisp, witty, but with no trace of growing refinement or culture. The seventy-two tales of the "Heptaméron," on the other hand, are epoch-making in the æsthetics of prose fiction, because they join to the joy of life that pulses with healthy vigor through all the early pagan renaissance, a refinement of manners and morals and a grace of conception that belongs rather to the humanists, and a delicacy of observation and description that is peculiarly its own.

Meantime the traditions of Rabelais were continued in the latter half of the century by the "Apologie pour

[1] Nicolas de Troyes and Noel du Fail are still earlier imitators of De la Salle, but intrinsically of less importance.

Hérodote" of the scholarly Henri Estienne,[1] a very amusing attack on the clergy of the time that did much to aid in fixing the classical language of the next century. Then, as a belated fruit of this epoch, there appeared, in 1610, Beroald de Verville's "Moyen de parvenir," a curious mixture of wit, learning, and vulgarity, with a plenteous store of anecdotes that might have furnished him with another "Cent nouvelles" if he had not preferred to strew them in the freakish dialogue of his mad *fratrasie*. Between him and Des Périers, both in style and time, is the Abbé de Brantôme (1540–1614), ostensibly a writer of contemporary biography, but really a laughing collector of piquant and scandalous stories of the *dames de par le monde*, told with great gusto and considerable power of character painting, so that his works are reprinted and still read.

Prose satire first at this period became an important political weapon in the "Ménippée," that several liberal and patriotic Catholics directed against the League and its desperate defence of Paris in 1593; while in his "Essays" Montaigne had already created a new type of prose writing that has gained little at the hands of his successors, for the inventor of the essay is still the most popular essayist.

The exuberant hopes of the pagan renaissance, as they appeared in the joyous nature-worship of Rabelais, had not been fulfilled, and to that period of generous expansion there had succeeded a reaction to easy egoism and unaggressive skepticism. This is the temper in

[1] Otherwise known as Henry Stephens, from his association with the English reformers in 1550. He was the most illustrious of a famous family of French scholars and printers. See Encyc. Brit., xxii. 534 sqq.

which Montaigne chooses the devices "What do I know?" and "What does it matter?" He had been a boy of scholarly and sedentary tastes, and carefully trained in the classics. His manhood, though uneventful, was such as to bring him in contact with all phases of life; and his ripe experience has as its fruit the "Essays," of which two books appeared in 1580, and the more important third book in 1588. No French work has exercised so great and lasting an influence on the writing and thought of the world.[1] Montaigne here inaugurates the literature of the public confessional, of loquacious egotism. His "Essays" are indeed, as he says, "a book of good faith." He takes us into his confidence, and rambles on in delicious and not unmethodical desultoriness. The essays sprang, no doubt, from such note-books as scholarly men used to keep in that age, and gradually rounded themselves into their present form from a few connected thoughts. In the last series, however, there is far more conscious composition, and these essays are nearly four times as long as the earlier ones. The subjects are very varied, and the titles are often mere pegs to hang ideas upon. There is not much about Virgil nor even about Latin poetry in the essay on the "Verses of Virgil," and there is still less about coaches in "Des Coches." Nowhere is there any trace of searching for subject or effect. He notes what comes into his mind, and as it comes; he tells us what he thinks about what happens to interest him. His work has all the charm of nature and not a little of hidden art.[2]

[1] Montesquieu's "Spirit of Laws" had more influence on politics, and Rousseau's novels on the feelings and life of two generations.

[2] Montaigne was translated into English by Florio in time to be used by Shakspere, and Florio has had many and distinguished suc-

In his style and vocabulary Montaigne profited by Ronsard, but he was no blind follower. He saw the danger of indiscriminate innovation. "Keen minds" he says, "bring no new words into the language, but with a cautious ingenuity they apply to it unaccustomed mutations. And," he adds in words that might apply as well to the symbolists of our day as to the *rhétoriqueurs* of his own, "how little it is in the power of all to do this appears in very many French writers of this century. They are bold enough and disdain to follow the beaten track; but lack of invention and of discretion ruins them. Their work reveals only a wretched affectation of singularity, with cold and absurd metaphors that amuse rather than elevate their subject. If only such men can gorge themselves with what is novel, they are indifferent to what is effective. To seize the new they will abandon the usual, which is often the stronger and the more vigorous."

It cannot be denied that Montaigne's average prose is better than the average prose of Ronsard, and his best is almost the best that France has to show. Naturally, therefore, it was the subject of narrow criticism by Malherbe and the early Academicians. But while Balzac and Vaugelas fettered and puttered, and while Boileau taught the French muse to pick her cautious way along the strait and narrow path of his coldly objective classicism, while the Pleiad was discredited and Ronsard forgotten save by La Bruyère, the naturalists of the sixteenth century lived stubbornly on. Rabelais and Montaigne were still

cessors. On Montaigne there is an essay in Emerson's "Representative Men" and two excellent books by Paul Stapfer, — "Montaigne," in the *Grands écrivains français*, and "La Famille et les amis de Montaigne."

widely read, and their unfettered independence did much to shorten the triumph of literary absolutism, just as the tendency of their thought contributed to shorten the reign of political tyranny. It was not until wise rules had been broken together with cramping fetters by the Romantic revolt that Ronsard was restored to honor by precisely that movement in French literature with which he has least in common; but no revolution of taste or criticism has ever shaken the universal recognition of the greatness of Rabelais and Montaigne.

CHAPTER II.

THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.[1]

"At last Malherbe came." With these words or this thought it has been customary, ever since Boileau's time, to begin the study of the classical century of French literature. According to him, Malherbe was first in France to introduce a correct cadence into prosody. He first "taught the force of a rightly placed word, and brought back the muse to the rules of duty." He improved the language so that "it offered nothing rude to the cultured ear;" he banished *enjambement*, or the interlocking of verses, and "taught stanzas to close with grace."[2] This appreciation by one mediocre artisan in verse of the merits of another, if perhaps not altogether "false in fact and imbecile in criticism," is certainly a great exaggeration; but it represents fairly enough the sentiment of the age of

[1] A considerable part of this chapter appeared in "The Sewanee Review," November, 1894. I have found helpful criticism for the period covered by this chapter in Faguet, xvii. siècle; Brunetière, Études critiques and Évolution des genres; Le Breton, Le Roman au xvii. siècle; Morillot, Le Roman en France; and Lanson, Littérature française.

[2] Malherbe, b. 1556, d. 1628. Boileau's lines paraphrased above are:—

> Enfin Malherbe vint, et le premier en France,
> Fit sentir dans les vers une juste cadence,
> D'un mot mis à sa place enseigna le pouvoir,
> Et réduisit la muse aux règles du devoir.
> Par ce sage écrivain la langue préparée
> N'offrit plus rien de rude à l'oreille épurée.

Louis XIV., while the fateful error it involved was portentous to French lyric poetry for more than two centuries of pseudo-classical artificiality and stagnation. The qualities on which Boileau insists are metrical polish, meticulous accuracy in rhymes, greater diligence in the rhetorical arrangement, and a more anxious care in the choice of words, the whole joining in what might be justly described as a zealous and untiring pursuit of the commonplace. As might be anticipated, then, Malherbe will never shock, but he will never thrill. There is no flash of genius in the poems, and, so far as can be seen, there was none in the man. Why, then, were these qualities, that fifty years before would not have raised a poet above nameless mediocrity, capable of making a leader in 1600? What peculiar conjuncture made readers turn from the kernel to the husk? What suffered the genius of Régnier to be a voice crying in the wilderness, while a vastly inferior poet became the prophet of successive generations till the Revolution came to make all things new?

To understand this aberration of æsthetic taste we must look beyond literature to the political and religious world. The renaissance had been a period of unrest, of reaching out in untried directions of tentative effort, of a confident iconoclasm, too, and of strongly developed individualism. This is the spirit of the earlier half of the sixteenth century. Then follows a growing lack of faith in the new learning as a panacea for human ills; but as yet there is no loss of individuality. Each writer strikes out on his own line, cares little for precedent or law in language or metre, so that he can say what he has in him to say. Originality is more prized than correct diction,

strength than polish. So while these men left admirable work behind them, each writer's legacy to the world was stamped with a singularity that made it little adapted to form a school or train a succession. The renaissance had sacrificed the old principle of authority to freedom of inquiry in many departments of intellectual and ethical life. In literature this freedom resulted in a division of energy, remarkable in its immediate results, but without promise of healthy development and continuous growth.

By the end of the sixteenth century the reaction came. The wars of the League had been a cruel deception to the high-strung hopes of a new era of peace and good-will, the sphere of human knowledge had been widened beyond the hope of individual grasp, and the limitation of the mind was brought home to it with crushing weight. The intellectual lassitude that resulted found its expression in criticism rather than in fresh creation. Save Régnier, who appears as one born out of due time, the first half of the seventeenth century shows no great lyric or epic poet; and when at last La Fontaine appears, he is a very *enfant terrible* to his contemporary critics, who praise his defects and bear with his virtues. In prose, too, the best work is critical and analytic. The drama, because more directly in touch with the people, preserved a more independent life, yielding least and latest. But Malherbe expressed the state of mind of the cultured men of the time; he is the herald of what is typical in the classical school, the "Age of Louis XIV." His poetry was an art; it could be learned, weighed, measured. You could calculate the percentages of imperfect or cognate rhymes, of incorrect verses, of words and phrases that presumed to stir the mind from a becom-

ing balance of calm repose. This age understood *th*[illegible] poetry; but when it saw these very qualities tran[illegible] fused by the fire of Ronsard's genius, who had don[illegible] all that was ever claimed for his pedantic successo[illegible] *that* was an individuality that defied mechanical criti[illegible] cism, and wearied minds already predisposed to mak[illegible] great sacrifices for order and propriety in the state, and in literature also. This temper of mind, tha[illegible] prefers order and rule to originality and individual[illegible] ism, begins to dominate the literature of France wit[illegible] Malherbe; and it exercised an almost undispute[illegible] authority for good and ill till the Romantic revol[illegible] in the third decade of our century. "The rule o[illegible] rules becomes to resemble one another."

So the lyric innovations of the Pleiad were obscured [illegible] and its pedantry superseded by a studied rhetorica[illegible] impersonality, against which Régnier fought a losing[illegible] fight, though his satires are among the most vigorous[illegible] that French literature has to show, and contain [illegible] powerful attack on Malherbe and the upas-tree of his[illegible] overweening criticism, while several of his short[illegible] poems are delightful in their pathos or graceful wit. Malherbe's merit, on the other hand, is almost wholly formal. He crystallized the language into its classical form. He strove to the best of his ability to prune its unfruitful shoots without impoverishing its vital force, and in this effort he ranked logical clearness above all other qualities. Thus he sacrificed the lyric and Italian element in the Pleiad to eloquence. He aimed to give to the luxuriant but irregular phraseology and prosody of his predecessors artistic restraints that could not fail to further the development of literary form, though Malherbe's worth appears rather in the work of his successors than in his own. Indeed, he wrote

very little, for the most part occasional verses addressed to the court or aristocracy; but it is hard to read that little without weariness at a mediocrity whose great fault is that it has not virility enough to err. Personally his biographer and pupil, Racan, shows him as a man of petty and presumptuous arrogance,— a quality illustrated by his attitude toward Ronsard, whom he first plundered of all that he was capable of valuing and then mocked with systematic depreciation. The spark that helps some of his verses, for instance the "Ode of Consolation," to an asthmatic life is Ronsard's; the spirit that insists on rhyming for eye as well as ear, that forbids the linking of words etymologically connected or of proper nouns, that seeks curiously, as his biographer tells us, "for rare and sterile rhymes,"— that spirit is all his own. And yet perhaps this very exaggeration of correctness was a necessary protest against the careless negligence of genius, and an essential prelude to the more studied harmonies and the more artistic liberties of the great poets of our own century. Without Malherbe we can conceive perhaps of Verlaine, but hardly of Lamartine, of Hugo, or of Leconte de Lisle.

Malherbe's "Art of Poetry," like that of the "Meistersinger" in Germany, was something that could be taught on a tally-board; and he had worthy disciples, artisans in verse such as Maynard, Racan, with some true poetic gift and a more genuine appreciation of nature, Voiture, a graceful but "idle singer of an empty day," the anacreontic Saint-Amant, and others whose names are shadows. All of these suffered from the artificial conceits that the literary lights of the Hôtel Rambouillet had brought into fashion. But the muse that had been thus "brought back to the

rules of duty" was presently to be drilled in them by a master of deportment more strict than Malherbe had ever been. This man who did most to clip the wings of the French Pegasus was Boileau (1636–1711), a pedantic Parisian bourgeois, whose critical *obiter dicta* were long regarded as sacred by French critics and French schoolmasters. He was fairly acquainted with Latin, and his lack of familiarity with the Greek poets may be excused by his obvious inability to appreciate them; though in the curious controversy between the Ancients and Moderns that marked the close of the century in France, and found its echo in the pamphlet warfare of Bentley and Temple in England, he loudly proclaimed the superiority of the Ancients, and ranged himself with the Cartesians in opposition to the renaissance spirit. The order and self-restraint of the classical æsthetics attracted his scientific mind; but he never thoroughly grasped the fundamental principles of Greek literary art, and his indifference to the contemporary literatures of other countries was paralleled only by his ignorance of the earlier writers of his own. He did not conceive his critical canons as relative to his time and his environment, but as absolute for all times and all races, and hence he felt that he could neglect the past without loss. Still, if Boileau lacked a pure and catholic taste, he had much honest and loyal though stubborn and rough good sense, which he savored with a little epicurean realism that made his destructive criticism of his *précieux* contemporaries usually just, though it may have been unnecessary. Especially should one hold in grateful remembrance the quietus given to the ghost of chivalrous romance by his "Dialogue sur les héros," though there had not been much real life in that monstrosity

since the "Roman comique" of Scarron. He did indeed guide the next generation to a true if narrow naturalism; and though he formulated rather than inspired the dramatic art of Molière and Racine, he did much to direct their talent as well as that of La Fontaine to its most fruitful channels. He was the dogmatist of the school of 1660; and it was his sound common-sense, more perhaps than any other one thing, that spread and prolonged its influence.

The positive effect of Boileau's criticism was, however, deadening and narrowing.[1] His rationalistic and Cartesian adaptation of Horace's "Ars poetica" proclaimed with sufficient talent to persuade a degenerating taste that poetry was artificially raised to a science. He imposed upon many men of no genius, and perhaps stifled the genius of some; his only great scholar who gained by the teaching was Racine. For his talent could profit by instructions that would have trammelled Corneille and amused Molière.

A few lines from Boileau's "Art of Poetry" will serve to suggest his spirit. In tragedy it is essential, he says, —

> Qu'en un lieu, qu'en un jour, un seul fait accompli
> Tienne jusqu'à la fin le théâtre rempli.

And then it must not have a Christian basis, for

> De la foi d'un chrétien les mystères terribles
> D'ornements égayés ne sont pas susceptibles.

Even in comedy we must have no naturalistic studies. This is to his mind the great error of Molière, who

[1] Boileau's descriptive verses suggest to Lanson (p. 483) an "unsentimental Coppée." Sainte-Beuve finds in his poems courage and audacity, but never truth. Cp. "Nineteenth Century," December, 1881.

Peut-être de son art eût remporté le prix
Si, moins ami du peuple, en ses doctes peintures
Il n'eut pas fait souvent grimacer ses figures.

Rather than study the vulgar foibles of mankind, we should "imitons de Marot l'élégant badinage," for elegance of language is a prime and universal necessity:

Sans la langue, en un mot, l'auteur le plus divin
Est toujours, quoiqu'il fasse, un méchant écrivain.

And if you would be a good writer of alexandrines, your main care should be

Que toujours dans vos vers le sens coupant les mots
Suspende l'hémistiche, en marque le repos.

Now, Boileau's postulate was sound enough. "Beauty is truth, and truth is nature." Hence let nature be the sole study. "Tout doit tendre au bon sens," — everything must tend to sober common-sense; there should be no vagaries of genius. And in all this Boileau was perfectly sincere; only to him "nature" was a very narrow segment of the sphere seen through glasses that both colored and distorted it. His "nature" is only what is typical, universal; and his method of attaining it is imitation of classical models and a careful distinction of the classical *genres*. He applied to form the same principles as to substance. Here, too, he would have no freaks, and novelty was condemned without a hearing. Technique to Boileau is second, and hardly second, to inspiration; and since formal technique tends to stifle inspiration, Boileau's teaching was progressively deadening to the succeeding generations.

As different from Boileau as a winding woodland stream from a well-kept canal is La Fontaine, a true

and naturalistic poet, who calmly ignored the traditional rules of his art and won the hearts of critics who shook their heads. It was impossible to deny his wit and winning grace; and the unambitious fable or tale in which he clothed them seemed to harbor a less dangerous license than more serious efforts would have done. The court and its critics could pardon the frailty of a sylvan muse, when they would have been pitiless to an error of Melpomene. So La Fontaine preserved and handed down the tradition of metrical liberty to the Romantic poets of 1830.

La Fontaine's first work of importance, the first book of his "Contes," dates from 1664 and his forty-third year. Already he had become socially popular, and had been intimately associated with Boileau, Molière, and Racine. More "Contes" (1666) were followed by "Fables" (1668); and the year 1671 shows his versatile genius as editor of a volume of mystically religious verse, as author of "Contes," whose humor was very unrestrained, and of "Fables," whose equal humor was quite without this gallic spice. These seven years were the best fruitage of his long, easy, and irresponsible life. For La Fontaine seems never to have quite outlived the carelessness of childhood, — a trait that impressed all his friends, and is reflected in the words with which Louis licensed his election to the Academy (1683): "Il a promis d'être sage." After this he wrote only "Fables." His friends took care of him when his wife declined the burden. He died, after a tardy conversion to the religiosity that the aged Louis had made popular, in 1695. Endless anecdotes tell of his guileless simplicity and absent-mindedness. His intimates called him the "good fellow." Of them all Molière alone, perhaps, justly

appreciated his literary importance. "Our wits labor in vain; they will not outlive the *bonhomme*," he said when once he overheard Boileau and Racine chaffing their common friend. And he was right, for he has always been more read than either of them; and as time goes on, it is felt that he was of greater service than they,—a consummation doubtless very far from the dreams of either the critic or the tragedian.

The "Fables" and the "Contes" have exercised a deep and permanent influence both on French literature and on our own. La Fontaine's miscellaneous work,[1] though often good, is less individual and little read. His "Contes" are essentially *fabliaux* developed by a studied prosody and delicate feeling for style, coupled with a skill in narration that is the height of art in its apparent ease and naturalness. He is the true continuator of De la Salle, of Des Périers, and of Marguerite. Now, neither he, nor they, nor their Italian fellows, recognized what we to-day hold to be fundamental conventions of decency. Their stories deal very largely with subjects not now admitted to polite literary circles, but then regarded as not unbecoming even by such irreproachable ladies as Madame de Sévigné. The same thing is observable in English literature. If these "Contes" are to be read at all, it must be in the simple, naïve spirit in which they were written. There is no sniggering about them, no conscious pandering to vice. They represent a phase in the development of European morals, which we may describe as the persistence of the hedon-

[1] Hemon, Œuvres diverses de la Fontaine, gives the best of these, notably the "Voyage en Limousin" and the prose version of "Psyché," that for its charming grace of style may rank with the best prose of Fénelon and Madame de Sévigné.

istic revolt of the renaissance between the old faith and the new Cartesian philosophy.[1] It is no longer the lusty joy of life that pulsed in Boccaccio and in Rabelais, with their eager love of sense and beauty after centuries of ascetic repression, nor yet the "subtle mixture of passion and sensuality, of poetry and appetite," that we find in Marguerite and Ronsard. The renaissance was no longer a revolutionary force, and what was a passionate cult to Boccaccio becomes in La Fontaine the elfish naturalism of a satyr child. Read in the spirit of the writer, the "Contes" are charming; read in the spirit of modern prudery, they are earthly and sensual. Of course, if we choose, we may clasp our hands with the Pharisee and thank God we are not as these men were, or we may fix the difference without drawing the comparison. We have no right to judge the work of one century by the moral standards of another.

There is no need of any such reserve, however, when we turn to the "Fables." They were, are, and always will be, wholly delightful in the graceful liveliness of their narration, in the restrained naturalism of their art and the homely worldly wisdom of their unobtrusive moral. One knows not whether to admire more the varied mastery of the form, the accurate analysis and observation of human nature, or the boldness with which, in the later books, he uses the fable as a cover for political teaching that is sometimes startlingly radical. As Saintsbury has gracefully said: "The child rejoices in the freshness and vividness of the story, the eager student of literature in the consummate art with which it is told, the experienced man of the world in the subtle reflections on character and

[1] Cp. Lanson, p. 552.

life which it conveys." Thus, in a double sense, these "Fables" are not of one age, but for all ages, and for all men, except it be poets of the type of Lamartine, who could discern only "limping, disjointed, unequal verses, without symmetry either in the ear or on the page," in stanzas where others find a most original and studied harmony.[1]

The "Fables" of La Fontaine are familiar to every French school-boy, acquaintance with his work is presumed in all cultivated society, turns of expression and phrases taken from them fall as naturally from the lips and pens of educated Frenchmen as biblical phrases did, and perhaps still do, from New England Puritans. The universal acquaintance with his work influenced and aided the emancipation of poetry by the school of 1830, especially among those who still did homage to Boileau with their lips though their hearts were elsewhere. For La Fontaine is very great, perhaps supreme; but it is in a kind of poetry that is not great. Therefore, though he is the best fabulist and best story-teller that is known to French literature, he is not a great poet. But he is the one poet of his century whose poetry is still generally read and enjoyed, while Boileau's verses are studied rather as rhetorical models and as essays in criticism.

It was natural that the prose of the early part of the seventeenth century should suffer less from artificiality than lyric poetry, the most sensitive of all literary forms; but it too felt the reaction, and there is nothing to recall the verve of Rabelais, the force of Montaigne, or the grace of Marguerite, in the work

[1] Rousseau and his age cared too much for their "state of nature" to care for La Fontaine, but Voltaire toward the close of his life regretted the strictures of his youth. See his letter to Chamfort.

of the first third of the century. In fiction the changed spirit shows itself in the influence of the Italian Pastorals, and in imitations of those Spanish followers of Góngora who were the chief instigators throughout Europe of the style known to English students as Euphuism. This studied affectation showed itself in France, as elsewhere, chiefly in chivalrous romances. The immediate model was the Spanish "Amadis," that had been translated late in the sixteenth century. Hence these novels will usually be named, at least by readers of Don Quixote, with a certain mocking shrug. The best of them is D'Urfé's "Astrée," whose chilly heroine tells of the combat in her soul between love and reason, of which the linked sweetness is prolonged through some five thousand pages, during which her love-sick Céladon learns to know himself sufficiently to discern that a pastoral lover "is no longer man, for he has cast off all wit and judgment." It is but just to say that Céladon's foil, the inconstant shepherd Hylas, is not without humor, and has touches of quite modern *blague*. "Astrée" was a pastoral; the "Grand Cyrus" and "Clélie" of the Scudérys pictured modern society under the thin disguise of heroic romance. Yet it is only with amused curiosity that one notes to-day the ponderous apparatus of their elaborate allegory, or glances at the explanatory map of "Tenderland," with its rivers of Esteem, Gratitude, and Inclination, its villages of Attention, Verses, and Epistles, its lake of Indifference, and its seas of Enmity and Danger.

In their day D'Urfé and the Scudérys, with other similar though less talented novelists,[1] were immensely popular, and that among the most cultured and aris-

[1] E. g., La Calprenède, Camus, and Gomberville.

tocratic class. Indeed, the picture of society that "Astrée" painted was the inspiring cause of the first Parisian *salon*, which met at the Hôtel Rambouillet and took its name from its hostess. The *raison d'être* of this coterie, like that of Céladon and his mistress, was the attrition of witty conversation in an exclusive society. But narrow as this circle was, both in its principles and its numbers, it exercised a very important influence on the whole classical period, for by its unnatural straining after rare and curious conceits, it interrupted the development of a simple and direct style. Thus it fostered an artificiality that, in spite of Molière's satire, was not wholly banished from French literature till the rise of the Romantic School.

But so far as the pastoral or heroic romance was concerned, if the disease was acute the remedy was speedy. The analogy of other literatures would lead us to expect a reaction from over-strained sentiment to coarse naturalism. Of this Sorel's "Francion" had given a warning sign as early as 1622, and the old romances received their *coup de grâce* in Scarron's "Roman comique" (1651), that drew its inspiration from Rabelais and the Spanish *novela picaresca*, and found its more artistic sequel in Le Sage's "Gil Blas."[1] A more independent social study that shows the influence of the realistic school of 1660 is Furetière's "Roman bourgeois" (1666), a collection of "human documents" for middle-class Parisian life. Meantime the same careful observation was being directed to the study of individual character by Madame de Lafayette, who, in "Mlle. de Montpensier," had discovered that marriage

[1] The corresponding English movement, begun by Defoe and continued by Smollett, owes much to both Spanish and French picaroon romancers.

was as appropriate as courtship for artistic treatment, and furnished in her exquisite "Princesse de Clèves" (1678) the starting-point of the psychological novel as distinct from romance. But the critics of the time were far from appreciating the real importance of this very popular book. Indeed, just as realism was thus announcing its advent in fiction, the court coterie, attracted by La Fontaine's "Cupid and Psyche," were seized with a fancy for writing prose fables, fairy tales, of which a vast number were born to an ephemeral life during the closing decades of the century. The best in this shadowy kind is Perrault, the French godfather of "Puss-in-Boots," of "Red Riding-Hood," "The Sleeping Beauty," and "Tom Thumb." In the next century this style was continued by Hamilton and many others, and was diverted later by Voltaire to political and philosophical purposes, and to ethical ones by Marmontel; while the "Princesse de Clèves" has no direct literary progeny.

Outside the sphere of fiction the prose of the century opens with Jean de Balzac, a rhetorical and painstaking continuator of Montaigne, who did much to smooth the way for the great prose writers and orators that followed. Aided by the prestige of the Hôtel Rambouillet, and by the foundation of the French Academy (1634), of which he was a leading member, he set deliberately to work to be to French prose the benefactor that he conceived Malherbe to have been to its poetry; but his work had value only as a stylistic model. Not so the limpid directness of Descartes and the supple strength of Pascal, the philosophers who illustrate this period. The former's "Discourse on Method" is the starting-point in France of a developed, scientific, argumentative style; while his "Treatise on

the Passions" is the systematic statement of the psychological basis of Corneille's tragedies, whose virile energy of will contrasts with the more feminine sentiment of Racine and the School of 1660.[1] It was from Descartes as much as from Balzac that Pascal and La Rochefoucauld learned their marvellous mastery over language. Pascal's "Pensées," though incomplete, are as clear as they are keen, as logical as they are charming. They combine the mathematical mind with the poet's vision, while his "Provincial Letters" against the casuistry of the Jesuits remain to this day an unmatched masterpiece of caustic irony and crushing contempt, clothed in a style of which one knows not whether most to admire the graceful energy or the brilliant wit. Pascal is the leader of the ascetic reaction against the naturalism of the sixteenth century and the facile ethics of the Jesuits, but he is also the first of French prose writers who seems thoroughly at home with his rhetorical tools. There has been gradual adaptation to new needs, but French prose has made no great advance, indeed has needed to make none, from his day to ours.

After these had gone before, progress became easy in other lines. So De Retz's "Conspiracy of Fiesco" marks a gain in picturesque historical description; while his lively, keen, and piquant "Memoirs" show an unscrupulous will and a pen sharpened by use. The worldly wisdom of his maxims yields only to the cruel temper of La Rochefoucauld's cynical satire. That the underlying pessimism of these men is fairly representative of a general state of mind, is clear from the reception accorded to their work. La Rochefoucauld, especially, marks an ethical change in the pop-

[1] Cp. Lanson, p. 393.

ular view of life that is an essential prelude to the iconoclastic optimism of the next century. He claims literary notice, however, not only as a representative, but as an individual. Condemned by the failure of the Fronde to retirement, he amused himself and a witty circle of friends, with the luxury of an aristocratic seigneur, and with "Memoirs" and "Maxims," in which he pitilessly unfolds the seamy side of life. Personally a good man, affectionate and beloved, he exhibits here the consistent and scornful pessimist; but he is more an aristocrat than a philosopher. He cares little for system or completeness of analysis. He takes up, one by one, such ideas as come to him, and uses them, with prudent reserves, to illustrate his theory, which is, briefly, that every virtue is a product of vices, while these are resolvable into selfishness, "in which all virtues are lost like rivers in the sea." This conclusion does not excite his anger, but rather amuses his curiosity, and that is much the effect it seems to have had on contemporary readers. Its effect on literary form was much greater. The nature of both influences will appear better from a few citations than from any brief analysis: —

Vice enters into the composition of virtues just as poisons do into medicines. Prudence collects and tempers them, and uses them against the ills of life.

People think sometimes that we hate flattery, but we hate only the way they flatter.

It is not always by valor that men are valiant, nor by virtue that women are chaste.

Men would not live long in society if they were not one another's dupes. . . . The world is made up of masks.

Old men give good precepts to console themselves for being no longer able to give bad examples.

Our passions are the only orators that always convince.

If we resist our passions, it is rather by their weakness than by our strength.

We all have strength enough to bear the ills of others.

If we had no pride, we should not complain that others had it.

We easily forget our faults when no one else knows them. . . . We try to be proud of the faults that we do not wish to forget.

We promise according to our hopes; we keep according to our fears.

We pardon those who bore us, but we cannot forgive those whom we bore.

The spirit that animates these "Maxims" can be traced in Voltaire, in Stendhal, and most clearly in the French cynic, Chamfort, and his greater successor, the German Schopenhauer. But their value as literature was much greater and wider; for it should be clear, even from what has been cited, that in these "distilled thoughts" French prose style has attained a pregnant terseness comparable only to the best verses of Corneille. As Voltaire said, the Maxims "accustomed men to think and to express their thoughts with a lively, precise, delicate turn;" and this epigrammatic quality has ever since been a characteristic of the best writers of France.

But with all this progress in various directions French prose still lacked its La Fontaine, its easy, graceful *raconteur*. This last step was taken in the letters of Madame de Sévigné (1626–1696), most charming of all correspondents. There are some three thousand of her letters, addressed for the most part to her rather unsympathetic daughter Madame de Grignon, and to her gay cousin, Bussy-Rabutin, author

of the amusing but scandalous "Histoire amoureuse des Gaules." In her younger days she had been an assiduous frequenter of the Hôtel Rambouillet, but she was shrewd enough not to fall into the vagaries that made its blue-stockings the just butt of Molière. Married in 1644, she was left a widow in 1651 with a son and a daughter, and after three years of retirement, returned to Paris in 1654, to be a literary leader there for nearly forty years. It is not, however, till after the marriage of her daughter, in 1669, that the correspondence begins to flow freely with its inexhaustible stream of court news and town talk, varied with brilliant reportorial sketches of the baths of Vichy. The succession of letters is interrupted only by rare visits to her daughter, and continues till her death. With the most charming naturalness she "lets her pen trot, bridle on the neck," "diverting herself as much in a chat with her as she labors with other correspondents." To her daughter she gives, as she says, "the top of all the baskets, the flowers of her wit, head, eyes, pen, style; and the rest get on as they can." As natural as La Fontaine, she is a model correspondent, wholly free from the artificiality of Balzac, or even from that balanced poise that in another field added to the glory of Pascal, and was the chief factor in that of Bossuet.

For the ultimate result of the criticism of Balzac and of the Academy, of Vaugelas, and the Hôtel Rambouillet, is not seen in La Rochefoucauld, nor in Sévigné, but in the elaborate though superficial periods of La Bruyère's "Caractères," who at his best suggests Voltaire, and in the polished orations of the court preachers of Louis XIV., whose ambitious energies were roused by the attitude of the king toward Gallican liberties, and by attacks of able Protestants and Jansenists. Chief among them, and perhaps the

greatest pulpit orator of modern times, was Bossuet (1627–1704), whose "Oraisons funèbres" and historical pamphlets are masterpieces of clear directness and plastic art drawn from a literary study of the Bible; while the suppler Fénelon (1651–1715), once tutor to the Dauphin, betrays in his style a deeper classical study. His "Télémaque" was long a model of style for almost all foreign students of French, and had an acceptance at home second only to that of La Fontaine's "Fables." It is refreshing to find that Fénelon's theory was even better than his practice; for he felt and regretted the restraints to which he yielded, and was keen enough to prophesy in his "Letter to the Academy" that the only result of such trammels to literature as the purists were striving to impose must be poverty; and dry rot, such as the close of the century was to see.[1]

Other great preachers of the time, whose names are not unknown even outside France, were Massillon, Bourdaloue, and Fléchier; while allied to them in style and mode of thought is Malebranche, whose chief charm, if not his chief merit, is a language whose picturesque clearness masks the misty conceptions that it irradiates. He marks the highest development of the classical style, and contrasts in this, as in his philosophy, with his contemporary Bayle, whose "Dictionnaire" (1697) was to the "Philosophers" of the following century at once a storehouse of most varied learning and the ironical herald of their skeptical infidelity.[2]

It was in prose that the language of 1600 had most needed order and reform, and it is in prose that the

[1] Lanson's keen analysis of Fénelon's character discovers in him an egoistical reactionary, more sentimental than logical, who had much in common with Rousseau, for whom he contributed to prepare the way.

[2] Cp. Brunetière, Études critiques, iii. 182

great permanent advance was gained during this century. Yet the writers who have left the deepest impress on the language are not the sententious builders of polished periods, but those who with true artistic sense aimed only to make prose a clear and limpid vehicle of thought. A great gulf separates Sévigné from Montaigne; but the advance was not due to the rhetoricians, to Balzac and Vaugelas, nor even to the orators, but to the thinkers and *raconteurs*, who each in his kind had something to say, and cared less for meticulous correctness than for clearness and point.

No form of literature in 1600 promised less than the drama. At the end of the century it had become what it has remained, the most important form of French literary expression. It is, therefore, of peculiar interest to see whether this great development was due to the classical spirit as represented by Boileau and the critical purists, or whether their influence was not rather a check than a stimulus. A student of comparative literature, remembering that this is the age of Shakspere and Lope, would look for dramatic activity in France also; and in the first thirty years of the century, while the lyric muse was learning her mincing steps, and prose was beginning to substitute the rapier for the quarter-staff, the number of playwrights bears witness to the growing popularity of the drama, due in great degree to the efforts of Hardy (1560–1631), who brought the stage more in touch with the audience than had been possible to the classical lucubrations of the school of Jodelle.

Hardy's reforms were quite independent of criticism, and dictated by the necessities of the situation. Himself attached to a dramatic company and writing plays to be acted rather than read, he cared less for scholarly than for popular applause, and declined with a light

heart the heavy burden of the "unities." Moreover, being compelled to various and speedy production, he was led to look for subjects in history and fiction, old and new. With some aid from the Italian, but probably none from the Spanish stage, he dramatized whatever seemed likely to suit the taste of his plebeian audiences; and so he introduced to the French theatre an element of fresh life and a partial naturalism that acted like a tonic, and induced other writers of more literary culture than he to offer their pieces to his company. One cannot but regret that he ignored or feared the greater freedom of the English stage, whose traditions would have been of priceless service to Corneille and Molière. But Hardy was no imitator. His virtues were due to his dependence on the healthy sense of the theatre-going masses; and to this, too, may be attributed his chief vice, bombast and rhodomontade to tickle the ears of the groundlings,—a weakness from which Shakspere is not wholly free.

Hardy died in 1631, a year memorable in the annals of the French stage, for it saw the proclamation[1] of the so-called classical unities of time, place, and action. After much battling and varying fortunes, these found favor with Richelieu in 1635, and by 1640 had established their fateful and exclusive sway in French tragedy. This minimizing of dramatic conventions suited the rationalistic and unimaginative spirit of the *précieux* of the Hôtel Rambouillet, who now began to take an active interest in the drama, and saw in the "unities" their narrow ideal of nature, good-sense, and rationality. But rules that were proposed in the interest of greater realism were destined to lead before the close of the century to the most deadening artificiality.

[1] By Mairet in his preface to "Silvanire."

The battle of the " unities " had been preceded by the first dramatic work both of Corneille and of Rotrou. The latter produced his first play at Hardy's theatre while still a genial youth of nineteen (1628), and presently joined the dramatic collaborators of Cardinal Richelieu, where Corneille was his associate, his friend, and, though only three years his senior, finally his master. Rotrou's really excellent work followed and was obscured by the greater glories of Corneille; but it is worth noting that in his " Saint-Genest " (1646) he imitated Corneille's favorite " Polyeucte " (1643), in treating on the stage a Christian conversion and martyrdom, quite in accord with the origins of the French drama, but contradicting more recent traditions and arousing the futile anger of the purists.

Corneille, if not the greatest, is the first in time of the galaxy that make the literary glory of the age of Louis XIV., though his best work was done before the advent of that monarch. Born in 1606, he was sixteen years older than Molière and preceded Racine by a generation. The Jesuits of his native Rouen educated him for the law, but bashfulness increased his distaste for pleading, and accident co-operated with genius to draw him to dramatic work. His first play, " Mélite," was produced in Rouen in 1629. But neither this nor the dramas that followed during the next seven years, though far superior to anything that had preceded them both in naturalness and vigor, contained more than a promise of better things to come; and this promise pointed rather to the Spanish drama of intrigue and to the comedy of contemporary society than to the true field of his tragic genius. It is hard to realize that the author of " Horace " began his career by a play in which kissing and pick-a-back are prominent features, and single-line repartees, " cat and puss dialogues," as

Butler calls them, are bandied about like shuttlecocks. But it may seem stranger still to find that he felt called upon to apologize for "his simple and familiar style," saying that he feared the reader would take simplicity for ill-breeding. So strong was the artificial reaction that Malherbe had heralded, even on the popular stage. But Corneille from the first had the courage of his convictions. He never sacrificed nature to rule, nor his thought to a vowel quantity. And he lost nothing by his daring. His earlier plays, enlivened by studies from life and the happy invention of the *soubrette*, won popular success both at Rouen and at Hardy's theatre in Paris. Thus the poet was drawn to the capital and the passing sunshine of Richelieu's favor in 1634. This he lost the next year by revising too freely a dramatic concept of the great yet petty Cardinal; but with the public he was a favorite to the last.

The contact with the wider life of Paris and his literary associations there awakened dormant powers. "Médée" appeared in 1635, and in two years he had written the "Cid" (1636), a drama so different from the previous attempts that it hardly bears a trace of the same hand. This work attracted universal interest, and placed him at once above all his predecessors and contemporaries. Richelieu was jealous; the purists of the Academy took umbrage, less at the liberties he had taken with his Spanish original than at those he had failed to take. Indeed among the coterie of the *précieux* the perversion of taste had reached such a point that Scudéry, a critic of some repute, asserted, and it seems believed, that its subject was ill-chosen, its irregularity unpardonable, its action clumsy, its verses bad, and its beauties stolen. The "Cid" does, indeed, lack the ethical depth and tragic force of "Horace" or "Polyeucte;" yet, as Boileau

said, "all Paris has for Rodrigue the eyes of Chimène," and the drama is the most popular on the stage of all his plays.

Corneille could not be as independent of cultured opinion as Hardy. The fierce battle that raged round the "Cid" caused him to withdraw for three years to Rouen. But he had faith in his genius, and with his return to Paris in 1639 there begins a period of almost unparalleled fecundity. The Roman tragedies, "Horace" and "Cinna" (1640), were followed by "Polyeucte," a story of Christian martyrdom, — a bold venture, for when it was read at the Hôtel Rambouillet, "the Christianity was found extremely displeasing" to these delicate souls, who thought heathenism good enough for literature, which, as we have seen, was also Boileau's conviction. Then came "Pompey" and "Rodogune," a tragedy of terror which marks the culmination of a tendency to exaggeration in passion and character that allies Corneille to the Romanticists. These, with "Le Menteur," the first good French comedy, and its "Suite," were all written within five years, which embrace about all of his work that is read and prized to-day. There follows a period of arrest (1645–1652) with some signs of decline, but with flashes of genius as bright as any in his work, and with an occasional character of extraordinary vigor such as Phocas in "Héraclitus." At length he suspended his dramatic work for seven years (1652–1659), and turned his talent to a versified translation of the "Imitation of Christ," and to critical essays of remarkable frankness on his own plays and other dramaturgical work. Between 1659 and 1674 he wrote eleven more tragedies of unequal mediocrity, though occasional verses showed all the fire of his prime. It was on two of

these that Boileau composed his famous and ill-natured epigram: —

Après l'Agésilas, Hélas,
Mais après l'Attila, Holà.

But Boileau, who thought Racine "a very clever fellow whom I had a hard time to teach to write verse," is recorded as of the opinion that the three great writers of his day were "Corneille, Molière, and — myself." The opposition that he met from those who followed the school of 1660 was not due to his failing talent, but to the new conception of dramatic art introduced by Boileau and Racine. Even in old age he never lost popularity; but he lived in narrow circumstances, if not in poverty. "I am satiated with glory and hungry for money," he said in these last years, with a grimness that seems to characterize his social relations. He would never curry favor, and Racine tells us he suffered in consequence. He had admirers, but not patrons, and he died in comparative neglect in 1684. Indeed the development of taste was leading away from him, and in the next century his fame suffered a partial eclipse. His own time and ours were more fitted to comprehend and appreciate him than the intervening period of iconoclasm and perverted criticism.

The first impression made on an attentive reader, even of Corneille's best work, is his unevenness. No poet rises to grander heights than he. If we judge him by his best, he will rank with the greatest; but many a lesser talent is more sustained, and may attain a higher average. Molière saw this: "My friend Corneille," he said, "has a familiar spirit, who inspires him with the finest verses in the world; but sometimes the spirit deserts him, and then it fares ill with him." Therefore Corneille lends himself

admirably to citation. Many of his lines cling to the memory, and any alexandrine with a rush of sound and startling pregnancy of suggestion seems a "Corneillian" verse. The latter point may be illustrated; one must be a Frenchman to feel the former.

"I am master of myself as well as of the world," affirms the Emperor Augustus in "Cinna." "Rome is no longer in Rome. It is all where I am," says Sertorius to Pompey. The assassinated Attila, strangled in his blood, "speaks but in stifled gasps what he imagines he speaks." What concentrated force in the reply of the father of Horace: "What would you have him do against three?" "That he should die." Or in Medea's: "What resource have you in so utter a disaster?" "Myself! Myself, I say, and that is enough." "Follow not my steps," says Polyeucte, "or leave your errors." Finally, since these citations might be extended almost indefinitely, consider the closing lines of Cleopatra's curse in "Rodogune": —

To wish you all misfortune together,
May a son be born of you who shall resemble me;

and Camille's upon Rome: —

May I with my own eyes see this thunderbolt fall on her,
See her houses in ashes and thy laurels in dust,
See the last Roman at his last sigh,
Myself alone be cause of it, and die of the joy.[1]

[1] Je suis maître de moi comme de l'univers (Cinna, v. 3). Rome n'est plus dans Rome. Elle est toute où je suis (Sertor. iii. 1). Ce n'est plus qu'en sanglots qu'il dit ce qu'il croit dire (Attila, v. 2). Que vouliez-vous qu'il se fît contre trois? — Qu'il mourût! (Hor. iii. 6). Dans un si grand revers que vous reste-t-il? — Moi! Moi, dis-je, et c'est assez (Médée, i. 2). Ne suivez point mes pas ou quittez vos erreurs (Poly. v. 3).

Et, pour vous souhaitez tous les malheurs ensemble,
Puisse naître de vous un fils qui me ressemble (Rodog. v. 4).

Puissé-je de mes yeux y voir tomber ce foudre,
Voir ses maisons en cendre, et tes lauriers en poudre,
Voir le dernier Romain à son dernier soupir,
Moi seule, en être cause, et mourir de plaisir (Hor. iv. 5).

It is lines like these, and they are many, that justify Faguet in calling Corneille's language "the most masculine, energetic, at once sober and full, that was ever spoken in France," and his verses "the most beautiful that ever fell from a French pen." It is such lines that induce Saintsbury, with perhaps unguarded enthusiasm, to call him "the greatest writer of France, the only one who, up to our own time, can take rank with the Dantes and Shaksperes of other countries."[1] It is of them that Voltaire says: "They earned Corneille the name Great to distinguish him, not from his brother Thomas, but from the rest of mankind."

It was said of Corneille's tragedies that they aroused admiration rather than tragic fear. He does not seek to interest us in the fate of his characters, but rather in the indomitable will with which they bear it, and in their haughty disdain for it. His is a drama of situations, not of characters. He delights in extraordinary situations and subjects, and belongs, as Brunetière happily puts it, to "the School of the Emphatics."[2] So it is natural that the "linked sweetness" of amorous talk that takes so large a place in Racine seems to him rather contemptible. There is no philandering or fine-spun sentiment even in the loves of Chimène and Rodrigue, and in "Sertorius" Aristie cuts short her lover with the lines:—

> Let us leave, sir, let us leave for petty souls,
> This grovelling barter of sighs and loves.

But tragedy, with the limitations of Corneille's method, forbids the resource of a minor plot, and involves much talk with little action. So his disdain

[1] *Encyc. Brit.* vi. 419. [2] Études critiques, i. 310.

of the endless subject of talk leaves him often with scenes and sometimes acts where interest hopelessly flags. Even his noblest work is not without monotony. It is always a like grandeur of soul that he represents, a like admiration that he excites. One who reads many plays of Corneille consecutively finds his appreciation dulled, and the public who witnessed them consecutively might have come to the same feeling. Then, too, he has not quite freed the drama from the lyric and epic elements that lay in its origin, but were foreign to its nature. Still there is a permanent quality in his work, as in Shakspere's, — a touch of nature that Racine, at his best, lacks. The superb declamations of Camille, of Auguste, or of Pompey's widow Cornélie, to name no others, will thrill audiences everywhere, as long as the antinomies of love and patriotism, honor and duty, perplex men's souls. But oratory is far from being the only use of language; and by giving to French when in a very plastic state a sententious imprint, Corneille exercised an influence on the future of his mother tongue very great, but not altogether helpful to its healthy growth and further development.

The rival of Corneille's later years was Racine, whom Boileau reckoned as his pupil, so that we may regard him as representative of the regular academic drama. He had a more stable temperament, his work was more even in character and polished in execution, and by close adherence to rule he long and successfully masked the weaker side of his genius. Such formal correctness suited the age of Louis, as it did that of Anne. But in less skilful hands than his, it sank quickly to a mannerism as dreary as it was contemptible. It is indirectly due to him that tragedy,

except for Voltaire, hardly lifts its head from the waters of oblivion between his death and the rise of the Romantic School.

Racine began his education at Port-Royal, and owed to that school the development of literary tastes, and a love for Greek, which furnished the basis of his tragic psychology, while that of Corneille had a more Roman sturdiness. He completed his studies at Paris, and at twenty was already author of poems that earned him the rewards of the court and the condemnation of critics. But he had soon the good fortune to meet La Fontaine and Molière, and was persuaded to try tragedy. His first drama, "The Natural Enemies," a study from Æschylus' "Seven against Thebes," is in style a feeble imitation of Corneille. His next work, "Alexandre" (1665), was also produced under the influence of Molière, and marked growing power; but Racine broke with him that year, and his later pieces were acted in the rival theatre of the Hôtel de Bourgogne. He now became the pupil of Boileau, who was inclined to attribute to himself the success of his diligent scholar,—not without some justice, for Racine's style was of the kind that is formed by criticism and profits by careful elaboration. This was illustrated by "Andromaque" (1667), a play that "made almost as much talk as the 'Cid,'" according to the testimony of Perrault, rousing the admiration of the friends and the scorn of the enemies of Boileau. These latter the dramatist, with the critic's co-operation, presently satirized in the Aristophanian "Plaideurs," which has unique merits, and shows the author more emancipated in his versification than he had been or was to be.

Corneille, like most writers of the earlier half of the

seventeenth century, had subordinated passion to will; Racine and the School of 1660, in accord with the changed temper of the time, subordinated will to passion. Hence critics said that Racine's tragic talent was limited to the painting of love. To prove them wrong he wrote "Britannicus" (1669), which went a long way to prove them right. The piece was not a success, and he returned the next year to the old theme with "Bérénice," a play that established the ascendency of the young poet over the aging Corneille, who had attempted the same subject. The plays that followed, "Bajazet" (1672) and "Mithridate" (1673), show greater suppleness and strength, but it is still the same well-worn theme. Yet they mark the height of the poet's fame, to which "Iphigénie" (1674) added nothing, while "Phèdre" (1677), exaggerating the defects of his qualities, failed to hold the popular favor. He seems to have been threatened with prosecution as a corrupter of morals.[1] Scruples that honor him caused him to withdraw from the stage, as Corneille had done. But his return to it twelve years later in "Esther" (1689) and "Athalie" (1691) showed his genius at its highest point. Indeed some regard "Athalie" as the masterpiece of the entire French drama. The causes of this superiority were also the causes of its lukewarm public reception. Both plays were written for Madame de Maintenon's great school for noblewomen at St. Cyr. Hence, by a happy necessity, love-making was suppressed, and a greater scope was given to action, in imitation of sixteenth-century models, than Boileau would have counselled or approved. This glorious aftermath closed the poet's literary career. He died in 1699.

[1] Cp. Brunetière, Époques du théâtre français, p. 155, note.

It accords with Racine's conception of dramatic art that his scenes are laid in foreign countries, where artificial conventions are masked by the strangeness of the environment. But there is no attempt at any local color. The Greece of Agamemnon was not more foreign to the Versailles of Louis XIV. than it was to the Greece of Racine's "Iphigénie." This is least felt in "Les Plaideurs," in "Esther," and "Athalie," for here the poet is more free; but it should be noted that in all his work the artificiality is in the received notion of tragic art rather than in the literary instinct of the man. At his most plastic period he had been associated with Molière, and to the last, so far as the conventions allowed, he tried to do what Molière had done in comedy, — to study and paint with an honest and naturalistic psychology human passions and feelings, dissociated from any relations of country or age.[1] He aims at a noble simplicity. His ideal, as he states it, is "a simple action, with few incidents, such as might take place in a single day, which, advancing steadily toward its end, is sustained only by the interests and passions of the characters," who, as he says elsewhere, "must be neither too perfect nor too base, so that hearers may recognize themselves in them; not altogether culpable, nor wholly innocent, with a virtue capable of weakness, that their faults may make them less detested than pitied." His interest, then, is in character, not in action; while Corneille always sought the complex crises of history.

Now, this conception of tragedy is much more akin to comedy than any that had preceded it. It is a

[1] He was reproached for this by Fontanelle, who found his characters so "natural" that they seemed base. Cp. Brunetière, Études critiques, i. 319.

study of human passion and weakness, as in Molière; but here the pitiless analysis is pushed to the point where amused interest yields to dread, and the smile to terror.[1] It is this naturalistic portrayal of passions common to all men of all time that keeps Racine's hold on the minds of Frenchmen, in spite of the constraints of his form; for of all Europeans they perhaps are most willing to condone this trammel to the free development of genius. Yet apart from this his talent was not of supreme rank. He had not the tragic grandeur of Corneille,[2] still less of Shakspere, and even in his chosen sphere he had not the keen psychological insight of Molière.

We are thus brought to the greatest of all writers of social comedy, incomparably the greatest French writer of his century, and perhaps the greatest name in all their literature, Jean Baptiste Poquelin, the first Parisian among the great writers of France, in his ethics successor of Rabelais and Montaigne, and predecessor of the rationalists of the next century, of Voltaire and Diderot; who, on becoming identified with the stage, took, and made immortal, the name of Molière (1622–1673). His parents were well-to-do, he was carefully educated by the Jesuits, and his philosophical studies with Gassendi, or early associations with such *libertins* as Lhuillier, left many traces in his work and more in his life. Then, like Corneille, he studied law. But

[1] This point is ingeniously elaborated by Faguet, 169 sqq.

[2] Brunetière, Études critiques, i. 178, makes this judicious comparison: "The work of Corneille, with all its imperfections of detail, is more varied than that of Racine. It has a surer and quicker effect on the stage; above all, its inspiration is higher, more generous, more elevated beyond the common order and ordinary conditions of life. But how much it costs to confess it when we come from reading Racine!"

presently we find him associated with a dramatic company, "L'Illustre Théâtre," which left Paris in 1646 to try its fortune in the provinces. For some years of wandering and precarious existence, during which the company visited almost all the larger cities of France,[1] Molière furnished their répertoire with light farces, and at length with more finished comedies in the style of the time, — "L'Étourdi" (1653 or 1655) and "Le Dépit amoureux" (1656). This wandering life was a priceless school to him in the study of middle-class men and manners. The future social comedian could hardly have used these years to better advantage. But the company, or at least Molière, was now financially prosperous; and in 1658, after more than twelve years' absence, he arranged for their return to Paris.

In spite of borrowed Italian elements, these early comedies had been enthusiastically received, and indeed they were much the best that France could show. But both were now cast in the shade by "Les Précieuses ridicules," the first dramatic satire on cultured society in France. The blue-stockings of the Hôtel Rambouillet, or perhaps their bourgeois imitators, who, according to the "Roman bourgeois," abounded in Paris, their affected language and manners, were held up to such good-humored ridicule that success was immediate and universal. Indeed the play has not yet lost its comic force, for learning has not wholly supplanted the affectation of it even among the women of to-day.

Equally typical of Molière is his next play, "Sganarelle" (1660), the first of those gay yet profound

[1] We hear of them at Agen, Angoulême, Béziers, Bordeaux, Limoges, Lyons, Montpellier, Nantes, Narbonne, Nîmes, Rouen, Toulouse.

farces, which still hold the stage because they raise first a laugh and then a thoughtful smile. "Don Garcie," which follows, marks a relapse to the traditional comedy; but in "L'École des maris," though the plot is borrowed from Terence's "Adelphi," there is a study of character and a pathos in the treatment of the aged lover that bears the print of the time and of Molière's genius. In February of the next year Molière himself married a young woman of his troupe, more than twenty years his junior, much to his future sorrow, though she was probably not so black as contemporary scandal asserted and literary scavengers delight to repeat.

In 1662 he touched more dangerous ground in "L'École des femmes," a covert naturalistic attack on hypocrisy and literal orthodoxy, by which he raised comedy from a diversion to a living teaching of a philosophy of life. Here first comedy became moral satire, and here first the aristocracy was ridiculed. This unchained a storm of rage, nursed by jealousy, such as actor-poet has seldom faced. He replied to his critics first in the witty "Critique de l'École des femmes" and then in the "Impromptu de Versailles," where his roused indignation did not scruple to name opponents and caricature rivals whom he scourged with caustic cruelty. In 1664 he renewed his attack on that most contemptible of all vices with three acts of "Tartufe, the Hypocrite," in which he inaugurates the comedy of characters as distinct from that of manners. This open satire of false devotion, which was perhaps also a covert attack on all unnatural moral constraint, earned him from these professors of peace and good-will the pious wish that this "demon in human flesh" might "speedily be burned on earth, that

he might burn the sooner in hell." It was five years before he was suffered to act the entire play; but the king's favor remained constant, and Molière continued the fight with the yet more daring "Don Juan," while light farces, such as "L'Amour médecin," relieved the serious contest.

But, except for "Tartufe," it is with 1666 that the great manner of Molière begins with "Le Misanthrope," which Boileau, Lessing, and Goethe unite to regard as his profoundest study of human character. Slowly but surely it has won its way to the foremost place in popular esteem also, and is now perhaps the most generally read and quoted of all his plays. Alceste, the noble pessimist soured by experience, Philinte, the easy-going social trimmer, the conceited poetaster Oronte, the witty and censorious Célimène are types as enduring as society.

Failing health now began to lessen his productivity, though not his wit. But in 1668 he brought out two masterpieces, the extremely witty "Amphitryon," and "George Dandin," type of the man who marries above his station and suffers the consequences. Then followed that wonderful psychic picture "L'Avare," the Miser. Then for three years (1669–1671), a succession of light farces, among them the immortal "Bourgeois gentilhomme," marks the recrudescence of his malady; but in "Les Femmes savantes" the poet returned to the subject of the "Précieuses," and with his maturer powers attacked the admirers of pedantry and the affectation of learning,— a subject always new, that in our own day has inspired one of the happiest efforts of the modern stage, "Le Monde où l'on s'ennuie." This was his last important work. Already a consumptive cough was wearing him away. On February

17, 1673, as he was acting in a new and almost fiercely bitter farce, "Le Malade imaginaire," he ruptured a blood-vessel in a spasm of coughing, and was carried from the stage to die. He was buried half clandestinely; for the Archbishop of Paris, feeling perhaps that Molière's ethics were as irreconcilable with the received form of Christianity as ever those of Rabelais had been, forbade the clergy to say prayers for him. But he had given liberally of his wealth, and the poor crowded to his funeral; yet the site of his grave is now uncertain.

Molière came at a propitious time, for comedy had not suffered from the false classicism of tragedy; and if little of merit had yet been done, there was promise in the general interest, both popular and cultured, in the subject. The danger was that Spanish or classical models might be too slavishly followed. In his hands farce became comedy, and so won a dignity and an independence that gave it the freedom of conscious strength. And at the same time he broke a way of escape from the "alexandrine prison" and the bondage of the unities. Some of his very best work was done in prose, and he never allowed verse to fetter his thoughts or be more than a subordinate means to a higher end. Indeed, he could not have polished his work as Racine did. In thirteen years he had written twenty-five plays, seven of them serious masterpieces; he had been stage-manager, actor, and often manager of the royal festivals at Versailles. Life to him had been work, and it was fitting that he should die in harness.

A man of indomitable energy, no dramatist ever united so much wit with so much seriousness as did Molière. There is often a pathetic, even a sad, background to his work; but he never allows this to get the better of

his healthy humor, which depends for its effect, not on intrigue or play of words, but on the unexpected revelations of character that come like flashes in his plays. And here his satire is directed always against those social faults that disguise or suppress natural instincts, not against the excesses of nature. It is not ambition or even hedonism that he scourges, but hypocrisy, pedantry, amorous old age, prudery, avarice, or preciosity.[1] The purpose to hold the mirror up to Nature, that she may see her face and mend her ways, gives even his roaring farces an element of true comedy. But this purpose brings with it a tendency to typify phases of character, as with Racine, rather than to present the complexity of human nature, as with Corneille; and this disposition was long characteristic of French comedy.[2] In the analysis of character Shakspere is more profound, and he tells a story with far more dramatic force. Indeed, to Molière the story, for its own sake, is a very minor matter; but Shakspere has less of the direct contact with and influence on contemporary life that is the result of Molière's naturalistic method and his study of the immediate environment.

This method was that of his successors, of whom Régnard only need be named, though his best work is disappointing, whether regarded in the light of what had preceded, or of the French comedy of to-day. For the tendency of the coming age was away from the naturalistic position. Yet, as one reviews the seventeenth century and the "classical" period, it is clear that naturalism was characteristic of its most successful

[1] Cp. Brunetière, Études critiques, iv. 185.

[2] Such titles as "The Miser," "The Misanthrope," or Régnard's "The Gambler," "The Distraught," illustrate this.

work. It began with an attempt to codify and regulate the individual conquests of the sixteenth century. Malherbe in poetry, Balzac in prose, undertook to be lawgivers for language and style. Just in so far as the century yielded, and the mental lassitude of the reaction from the Renaissance made it easy to yield, to this gospel of artificiality, stagnation followed. In prose it was least possible to crib and confine; and here there was the most varied development, from which it was easy to purge the chaff and the tinsel. In the drama the yoke was more felt, and in poetry most of all. But those poets and dramatists who were able to rise above these artificial constraints, and to build upon the foundations laid by the giants of the sixteenth century a structure of their own, the independent students of nature and society, — La Fontaine, Molière, in a greater degree Corneille, in a less degree Racine, — are those who are prized to-day, and prized most for that which the strict "classical" purists would have condemned

CHAPTER III.

THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.[1]

THE eighteenth century is the age of Voltaire in a sense and to a degree that is unparalleled in European literary history. Even Goethe, who has also his "century," is less typical, his sway less undisputed, and his excellence, though greater, less diversified; for it is the peculiar distinction of Voltaire that there is no department of letters in which he did not hold a prominent place, while in most he stood by common consent at the head.

Voltaire is not the author of the best lyrics of the century, but he comes just short of the highest place, being indeed all that a versifier can be who lacks what Horace calls the "divine breath" of poetry. His satires are the keenest, his tales in verse the wittiest, in the language. He is the author of the most correct serious epic and of the wittiest comic epic of his time; he is incomparably its best novelist and its best dramatist. His essays in physics are said to be creditable; and though he was neither a metaphysician nor a theologian, his works on ethics and theology are, and were, more read and prized than those of any of his philosophical or clerical contemporaries. He was far the best literary critic of that day, and its most popular historian. Besides this, he was the author of

[1] This chapter, with slight changes, appeared in "The Sewanee Review" for February, 1895.

an infinite number of miscellaneous pamphlets, and of a correspondence of appalling volume, almost all of which is interesting, at least, for its polished form. To whatever field of literature we turn, we shall find his mark set up in it. It is not until toward the close of the century that Rousseau, in the ethical and political field, rivals, and for a time overshadows, the philosopher of Ferney. Voltaire will introduce us to the century and accompany us through it; Rousseau will furnish its natural epilogue.

Voltaire (1694–1778), whose real name of Arouet is seldom given him, was the son of a wealthy and rather distinguished Parisian notary; but his early training was at the hands of his skeptical and scholarly godfather, the Abbé de Châteauneuf, and in 1704 he passed into the moulding hands of the Jesuits, who seem to have given him a better education than in later controversial years he liked to admit. He still saw much of the Abbé, and was far from cloistered. Indeed, during the first year of his school life he so won the attention and interest of his godfather's friend, the famous Ninon de l'Enclos, that she bequeathed him two thousand livres, — "to buy books," she said.

He left school in 1711, and pretended to study law; but all his ambitions were clearly literary, and he was already a member of the noted literary circle, "du Temple." His father, dissatisfied with such vagaries, sent him first to Caen; then to the Hague, where he got entangled with a young Protestant lady, to the yet more intense disgust of his parent, who actually obtained a *lettre de cachet* from the king authorizing his son's confinement. But he made no use of it; for Voltaire, always cautious in his daring, returned to Paris and the law, and occupied his mischievous energy

in writing libellous poems, until the perplexed father had to send him away once more. It was not till 1715 that he returned to the laxer society of the Regency and to his literary circle, whom he presently charmed by his first play, "Œdipe." But his itching fingers, under the provoking inspiration of the ambitious Duchess of Maine, were soon writing epigrams on the Regent himself that invited and justified a brief exile (1716), followed by confinement for ten months in the Bastille and a second short banishment from the capital. Yet, though the witty Orléans did not trust Voltaire, he enjoyed him; and late in 1718 the poet was able to produce "Œdipe" with success at Paris, whence political squibs soon drove him for the fourth time, though the good-humored Regent shortly after gave him a pension, and seems to have employed him in the secret diplomatic service from 1722 to 1725. His social position was already assured by the death of his father, who left him a respectable competency; and he occupied himself during these years as a literary dilettante with an epic, "La Henriade," and a second tragedy, "Mariamne." But in 1725 a quarrel with the Chevalier de Rohan sent him first to the Bastille, then to England, — an event of such importance to his development that it forms, like Goethe's visit to Italy, the turning-point in his intellectual life.

In England Voltaire got, first of all, a very considerable sum of money, which he employed so well in fortunate speculations and investments, that his future life was always free from financial care, and, at the last, almost seignorial. This made it possible for him to be more independent of patronage and favor than any literary man in France; and for much of the work

he had before him such independence was necessary. Then, too, contact with English character and institutions could not but have a deep effect on so mobile a genius. The contrast between France and England, greater then than now, stimulated his mind to more serious thoughts on society and philosophy, and he returned to France, more capable, perhaps, than any other Frenchman of seeing the weak sides of her constitution and polity, and ready to offer opinions on them, which are often specious, though seldom profound. He made also a serious though brief effort to understand Shakspere; and even if he failed to apprehend him, he learned much from the English stage that affected his literary taste and that of the French public also, to whom he was first to introduce one destined to have the profoundest influence on the literature of later generations.[1] Even more important to his intellectual development was the study of English science and philosophy, especially of Newton and Locke, by which he systematized his views of nature and religion.

After several tentative visits, Voltaire returned to France in 1729, where he continued his dramatic activity with "Zaïre" (1732) and some inferior plays, wrote his "History of Charles XII.," and began his comic epic "La Pucelle," the source of much amusement and of much deserved censure through many years of his life. But his restless spirit soon got him in hot water again with a volume of skeptical "Letters on the English," and with the "Temple of Taste," a satire on the poetasters of the time, accompanied by some remarks on Pascal, in which the orthodox scented

[1] See Pellissier, La Littérature contemporaine, p. 69, Le Drame shakespearien.

danger and heresy. They had the book burned, but the author laughed at them from across the frontier in Lorraine.

Here, soon after, he settled for some years at Cirey with Madame du Châtelet, the "respectable Emily" of his correspondence, for his hostess; and it is probable that ties closer than Platonic bound them, though Voltaire's loves, like Jean-Jacques', were always more cerebral than material, and Emily did not hesitate to supplement his affections by more commonplace attachments. He had now ample leisure as well as security, and here first he took up the serious profession of authorship. In 1735, with a cheerful self-confidence that was hardly justified, he produced a treatise on Metaphysics less philosophical than controversial; in 1736 came a popular exposition of the Newtonian system, and "Alzire," a drama of Peru; and this was followed by "Le Mondain," whose outspoken optimism, if not essentially anti-Christian, could hardly fail to seem so to the representatives of the French establishment.

The result was a long and bitter controversy, traces of which can be found in the allusions to the "Journal des Trévoux," to Fréron and Desfontaines, which abound in his epigrams and satires. To-day, however, "Le Mondain" seems far less offensive in its language and tendency than "La Pucelle," from which he still continued to "snatch a fearful joy," reading it to friends whenever he got a chance, while he guarded it from publication with ostentatious anxiety. During all these years his pen was tireless. The mass of minor work produced was enormous, and by 1741 he had completed "Mérope" and "Mohamet," dramas second only to "Zaïre."

Meantime, since 1736, he had been corresponding with the philosophic king, Frederic of Prussia, whom he met in 1740 and visited in 1743. Absence had now restored him to the graces of the Parisian court; in 1745 he was made royal historiographer, a post honored by the names of Racine and Boileau; and in 1746 he entered the Academy. But his literary indiscretions soon obliged him to leave these honors and French soil, still accompanied by the "respectable Emily," whose death at Luneville in 1749 left him a man of fifty-five, famous, rich, but without a home and without a country. It was natural, under these conditions, that he should lend a favorable ear to the invitation of Frederic to come to share, or, as he would interpret it, to lead, the brilliant group of literary men which that great king had gathered at his court. So, after a year of restless wandering and malicious activity that found its chief expression in satirical tales, he went to Berlin in July, 1750.

Voltaire's stay in Germany had more influence on the literary men of that country than it had on him. His quarrels and rupture with Frederic (1753) do not concern us. They were too great intellectually to get on well together, but too great also not to admire one another genuinely when apart. In his relations with the literary men of Frederic's circle, Voltaire appears in an unfavorable light, showing most strongly here, what he never failed to show elsewhere, vanity, spitefulness, financial unscrupulousness, a great desire to proclaim disagreeable and dangerous truths, and an equally earnest determination at all moral costs to avoid the consequences of so doing.

During his three years at Berlin, Voltaire finished his famous essay on the Reign of Louis XIV., and his

fiercest literary lampoon, the "Diatribe du Docteur Akakia," an insult to his fellow-guest, Maupertuis, which resulted in the severing of their relations, and closed Prussia to him as France was already closed. His "Essai sur les mœurs" now appeared, and made his position even more difficult; so it was natural that after some travels he should turn to Switzerland,—then, in spite of provincial narrowness, a noble refuge of free-thought. Here he could lead an independent life; and here, in or near Geneva, he made his "home," the first he had ever had, from 1754 till his death, nearly a quarter of a century later. At first he lived in the suburbs of Geneva; but he soon bought a large estate at Ferney, just across the French frontier, and so administered his domain that the population of Ferney grew under his fostering care from fifty at his coming to twelve hundred at his death. But he also prudently acquired various houses of refuge in Savoy, at Lausanne, and in other jurisdictions. He managed his large domain with patriarchal shrewdness, practised the most open hospitality, and permitted himself the luxury of a private theatre, as George Sand did later at Nohant, and also of a church, for which he obtained a relic from the Pope. He dedicated it "To God from Voltaire" (*Deo erexit Voltaire*), and ostentatiously communicated there, much to the vexation of his bishop. He made Ferney what Weimar became a half-century later, — the Mecca of literary Europe. All flocked to do him homage; few had the temerity to oppose his dicta. His influence, both in literature and ethics, was felt over all the Continent, and maintained by epigrams in meteoric showers, and by letters that made the circuit of the literary world. These last, of which the complete edition of his works counts

some ten thousand, were the chief source of his power, and perhaps the master work of his genius.

The most enduring works of this period are, first of all, "Candide," a prose tale directed against the received orthodoxy rather than against anything distinctively Christian, and for irony perhaps unsurpassed in modern times; then the "Commentary on Corneille," generously undertaken to relieve the necessities of that dramatist's niece; but perhaps most of all, the pamphlets written in defence of liberty of thought and against the tyranny of persecution, as it was even then being illustrated in France in the cases of Calas, of Sirven, of Espinasse, and others. That these men were mostly Protestants was natural, for only Catholics had the power to stifle thought, though the Huguenots might share the desire. The creed for which they suffered contributed nothing to the interest he felt in their wrongs. Indeed he had not a whit more sympathy with the infallible Bible than with the infallible Pope, and, like Erasmus, he had no wish to break with authority on a matter so uncertain, so incapable of proof, and to him so unimportant as orthodoxy, if he could but secure toleration. His often repeated exhortation "Écrasez l'infâme" does not allude, as some have vainly supposed, to the essence of Christianity, still less to the Christ, but to bigoted intolerance based on ignorance and self-seeking, such as he thought he found exemplified in the Jesuits of his time and their helpers, Fréron and Palissot; though Voltaire's ethics were really more antagonistic to Jansenists than to Jesuits. They continued the traditions of Rabelais and La Fontaine, but with a naturalism that is less rationalistic than hedonistic.

Many years were passed at Ferney in dignified ease, and Voltaire was a frail old man of eighty-four when the triumphs of Beaumarchais' "Barber of Seville" roused his vanity for a journey to Paris to witness the production of his own just completed "Irène." Its sixth performance, March 16, 1778, was an unequalled ovation for its laurel-crowned author, and one of the three or four great days of French theatrical history. Soon after, Franklin brought him his grandson to be blessed, and at a solemn séance of the Academy they embraced in true sentimental style. He even began another tragedy; but the old man had over-estimated the power of his body to follow his tireless mind. Presently came a collapse of physical strength so rapid that when the hour arrived when all Catholics desire the last sacraments, he had no longer sufficient self-control to maintain the solemn farce of a lifetime. He motioned the priest away, with a weak sincerity that would surely have cast a gloom over his last moments had it been granted him to recover a consciousness of his inconsistency. Dying thus (May 30–31), it was necessary to inter him in haste, before the episcopal inhibition should intervene to exclude him from consecrated ground. In 1791 the remains were taken to the Pantheon; but the sarcophagus, when opened in 1864, was found empty, the mocker mocking even from the grave.

We have now to consider the work of Voltaire, and with it the work of his lesser contemporaries in the various fields of his multifarious activity.

In lyric poetry not much could be expected of a period that continued the traditions of classical objectivity.[1] The first place during the earlier half of the

[1] Cp. Brunetière, Poésie lyrique, i. 48.

century belongs undoubtedly to Jean-Baptiste Rousseau (1670–1741), who, like Voltaire, was associated with the coterie "du Temple," and, like him, was in constant trouble because he could bridle neither his tongue nor his pen. He, too, was exiled in 1712, and passed the rest of his life at Brussels, continuing more industrious to make enemies than others are to get friends. His poetic work is not large. It consists mainly of panegyric or sacred odes, apparently studied from Boileau, and of licentious or cynical epigrams, which show the greater talent of the two, and passed with the classical critics for an imitation of Marot's "élégant badinage," as the odes did of his "Psalms." But J.-B. Rousseau was neither a great man nor a great poet, and to say that he was the best of his time may excuse from speaking of his fellows.

A generation later than Rousseau is Piron (1689–1773), probably after Voltaire the most brilliant epigrammatist of France, but too witty to be on good terms with his fellow wits, and too incapable, as his dramas showed, of any sustained effort, though many of the best lines of his sparkling comedy, "La Métromanie," have passed into the small change of cultured conversation. Another writer of light verse is Gresset, a "one-poem poet." His "Vert-Vert," a parrot who passes from a monastery to a nunnery and picks up phrases far from monastic on the journey, is perhaps the best in its kind since La Fontaine, and shows a more kindly humor than the "Contes" of Voltaire or the work of his other contemporaries. Gresset, for the greater part of his life, was connected with a religious order, and he is one of the very few poets of this time who never pander to vice; but his character, though gentle, was weak, and the close of his life was wholly

under the direction of those who thought the graceful badinage of "Vert-Vert" a matter for fasting and penance. Later fabulists, Florian and Marmontel, preserved the traditions of the apologue; but their work has only historic interest.

In the honeyed, amorous, or licentious verse of the "glow-worm" type, Voltaire was surpassed, and might well be content to be, by the perfumed lubricity of Gentil-Bernard, Dorat, and Parny, the last a Creole who brought at first some breath of fresh life into French verse, but later lost this facile touch, so that his longer poems have been judiciously pronounced "equally remarkable for blasphemy, obscenity, extravagance, and dulness." It must be allowed that if in this century there is no verse that is extremely good, there is much that is extremely bad, and very little that is worse than these later poems of Parny. But the best in this kind are only triflers. Much later and a step higher are the anacreontic Desaugiers and Rouget de Lisle, whose immortal "Marseillaise" is less characteristic than his convivial verses, which mark the true ancestor of Béranger. In the descriptive school of poetry this century pointed with pride to Delille, the French Thomson, whose insatiate thirst for paraphrase turns backgammon into "that noisy game where horn in hand the adroit player calculates an uncertain chance," while sugar masquerades as "the American honey which the African squeezes from the juicy reed." Poetry became a puzzle till the revolt of the Romanticists brought plain speaking and the *mot-propre* into fashion again, substituting virility for these elaborate conceits.

It need not be said that Voltaire had cultivated all these fields except the sacred canticle. He had written

also the only serious epic of the century worthy to be named, though "La Henriade" is poor enough in its jejune correctness; and his "La Pucelle," with all its faults, is still the best comic epic of France. His versified "Contes," though malicious in their ethical bearing, are the wittiest and best told since La Fontaine, and his satires are hardly second to the best work of Régnier and Boileau. No man had so great a command of *vers de société* as he. He never rose to true poetry; that divine spark was denied him. He lacked the sincerity that springs from noble convictions. But he produced an enormous mass of what has been justly called the "*ne plus ultra* of verse that is not poetry."

Yet the taste for a truer poetry was not dead in France. These years saw a revival of interest in the great sixteenth-century poets; a collection of the old "Fabliaux" was reprinted, as well as the works of Marot, Villon, and Rabelais; all of which had its reward in the Romantic School of 1830. But it was reserved for the very close of the century to produce a true poet, and to guillotine him just as he had revealed his promise. André Chénier (1762–1794), Greek by birth, half Greek by parentage, wholly classical in tastes and studies, attained the aspiration of the Classicists. But, in spite of Chénier's genius, the more fully he realized his ambition, the more artificial he became; and so he had little influence in speeding or retarding the development of the Romantic School, which indeed was well advanced before the tardy publication of the greater and better part of his poems (1819).

In regular tragedy that had languished since the death of Racine, Voltaire's supremacy was not ques-

tioned.[1] Indeed, what deserves mention outside his work does so almost wholly because it points to a revolt from traditions that he was anxious to maintain. Among his fifty pieces the comedies are less good than one would anticipate from the general character of his mind; even "Nanine," which he drew from Richardson's "Pamela," is only the best among second-class work. But if he never thoroughly mastered the technique of comedy, his best tragedies, some ten, approach more nearly to the correctness of Racine than any work of an age that had nothing to suggest the grandeur of Corneille, still less the profound psychology of Molière; he was the inventor of "local color" in tragedy, and in the dexterous management of the tragic form he may have surpassed in "Mérope" and "Zaïre" either of his great predecessors. His idea was to perfect the tragedy of Racine, itself the most perfect in his view that the human mind had yet produced. This he hoped to attain by increasing the action and heightening the spectacular effect. But while he laid stress rightly on these elements of interest, he found himself unconsciously carried away from Racine, toward the processes of Corneille, and even to the Shakspere he rejected. Yet his reforms seem timid enough today, and at the time attracted little animadversion.

For a bolder note of revolt had been sounded by Lamotte's attack on the regular tragedy, challenging the authority of the unities and the prestige of the ancients, though in his own best drama, "Inez de Castro," Lamotte had lacked the courage of his convictions. These were, indeed, far in advance of his time, and the contemporary tragedians, Crébillon *père* and

[1] Cp. Brunetière, Époques du théâtre français, p. 240, and Histoire et littérature, iii. 95.

his fellows, kissed the rod of tradition and of Voltaire, though Crébillon has occasional bursts of more Corneillian power than Voltaire ever attains. But he had also more Romantic exaggeration, and his characters show even less of the unconquerable mind, the strong will, that distinguished Corneille. Late in the century the standard of revolt was again raised by Ducis, who adapted several plays of Shakspere to French taste, between 1767 and 1792, and broke the way for greater successors.

But besides these revolts from regular tragedy, a radical modification of it appeared during this century in the tragedy of common life, which, with a parallel breaking down of the regular comedy to the comedy of pathos, confused the distinctions which had separated the tragedy and comedy of the Classicists. Then the *tragédie bourgeoise* and the *comédie larmoyante* inevitably merged into the melodrama, or *drame*, fathered by La Chaussée[1] and ably advocated by Diderot.[2] The essence of all this work is that the scenes shall be taken from contemporary life in its serious or serio-comic aspects. But though these beginnings of a very large and important section of the modern drama are of great historic interest, intrinsically they present little that is worthy to survive.

In comedy, Voltaire's best work was outranked both by his predecessor, Le Sage, and by his successor, Beaumarchais, while Destouches, Marivaux, and Sedaine were his not unworthy compeers. Le Sage (1668–1747), who is better known as the author of "Gil Blas," wrote also a multitude of short farces

[1] See Lanson, La Chaussée; Brunetière, Époques du théâtre français, p. 275 sqq.

[2] In his "Essai sur la *poésie dramatique*," 1758.

and operettas which stood in high repute; while his "Crispin" and "Tucaret" are true comedies, quite worthy of Molière. Both are prose studies of contemporary society, — the former more lively than probable, but scintillating with wit and palpitating with comic life; the latter more seriously critical, a cruel and realistic satire on the moneyed class that was already beginning to contest the social pre-eminence of the corrupted nobility, which in its turn received merited castigation, while provincial narrowness and mercantile pettiness were not spared, and the characters in both plays, as we should expect from his novels, were more completely rounded than the typical figures of Molière.

But if Le Sage, at his best, leads the stage in the former half of the century, Destouches is not far behind, and his work maintains a remarkable level of excellence, though he never deserts the typical method of Molière and Régnard. His "Philosophe marié" and "Les Glorieux" have life in them still. In Dancourt, too, one may trace the evolution of the comedy of condition from that of character. Where Molière, Régnard, and Le Sage had sought to combine various phases of a social vice into *the* miser, *the* misanthrope, *the* gambler, or *the* financier, he divides the phases among a group of characters, and writes of "Les Agioteurs," "Les Bourgeoises à la mode," or "Les Enfants de Paris."

Marivaux was a man of more originality, both for good and ill, in the drama and the novel also. His manner was sufficiently unique to furnish to the language the word *marivaudage*, which now stands for a rather effeminate wit and affectation of simplicity. But Marivaux was better than this word might imply. He was, above all else, a delicate, subtle, *précieux*

psychologist; and his dramatic mission was the apology of sentiment and the analysis of love, till then hardly attempted in comedy. This gave to women an equal prominence with men in the drama. In Molière the tender passion is assumed as a state; with Marivaux it is a development. His dramas begin with the dawn of love, and end usually with its declaration. As he said himself, "he spied out in the human heart all the nooks where love might hide when he feared to show himself, and the object of each of his comedies was to make love come out of one of those nooks;" to which Brunetière adds that if you substitute jealousy for love, you will define the tragedy of Racine. They are trifles light as air, but delicious in their apparent naïveté and hidden depth. There is, indeed, little or no intrigue, and so there is danger of monotony if his plays [1] be read consecutively; but it is a relief to find the old theatrical apparatus and conventions laid aside with a light heart for stories that transport us to a delicate and amiable fairyland, where we recognize ourselves as we should like to be. But though the idea of the development of love as a subject for comedy was a most fruitful seed, and all his successors profited by it according to their power, Marivaux founded no school; for as the century proceeded, the dramatic current was deflected by the stronger philosophical bent. The desire to sway the feelings and to preach a shallow, sentimental optimism takes possession of the stage under the banner of naturalism in the *Tragédie bourgeoise*, or of pathetic sentiment in the *Comédie*

[1] The best are "Le Legs," "Double inconstance," "Jeu d'amour et du hazard." See Larroumet, Marivaux; Faguet, xviii. siècle; Lanson, Littérature, p. 639; Brunetière, Études critiques, vols. ii. and iii.; Brunetière, Époques du théâtre; Lemaître, Impressions de théâtre, vols. ii. and iv.

larmoyante. The development is interesting, but, as has been said, the plays that illustrate it deserve no individual notice.

This change is often attributed to Diderot; but the reflected lustre of his achievements in literature and philosophy has probably made men attribute to him dramatic services that belong to his predecessors, notably to Marivaux, Lamotte, and Destouches.[1] His plays, "Le Fils naturel" and "Le Père de famille," were unfortunate illustrations of excellent theories, derived in part from the German Lessing, whom in turn they inspired; but there was nothing new in his ideas, nothing that had not been anticipated for the pathetic comedy by La Chaussée, while in tragedy Lamotte had demanded the use of prose and more action as early as 1721, frankly setting up the English standard for imitation. But if Diderot was neither first to preach nor to practise either the bourgeois tragedy or melodrama, neither was he the most eloquent proclaimer of the new doctrine, for that leaf must be added to the dubious laurels of Rousseau. Indeed, his original theory that the drama should present conditions rather than characters, "that the profession should become the principal object and the character only accessory," was rather retrogressive in its tendency, though it helped, perhaps, to turn the dramatists of the later nineteenth century to the modification of character by profession or environment, which is an important factor in the realistic art of Dumas *fils* and Émile Augier.

More truly and less obtrusively philosophic than the

[1] See Ducros, Diderot, Paris, 1894; Reinach, Diderot, Paris, 1894; and a notice of these books by Lemaître in "Journal des débats" (Hebd.), 4th and 11th August, 1894.

men of whom we have just spoken is Beaumarchais,[1] the most important dramatic figure in the latter part of the century, though he was the author of but two really successful plays. Beaumarchais had seen more of social life than any of his predecessors; for though, like Rousseau, the son of a watchmaker, he had ingratiated himself by skill and good fortune in court circles, where he made a wealthy marriage and influential connections in banking circles, while his "Memoirs," by their scathing exposure of the corruption of an unpopular Parlement, made him popular also with the influential bourgeoisie. A visit to England, undertaken in the government interest, had much influence on the relations of France to the North American colonies, then about to revolt from England; and its literary effect on Beaumarchais was almost as determining as it had been on Voltaire, for it needed only that to his knowledge of society and the recklessness characteristic at once of the spirit of the time and of his own, there should be added the art of English comedy to inspire his native wit with the epoch-making "Barber of Seville" (1775) and the "Marriage of Figaro" (1784). Barber Figaro, the hero of both plays, is a light-hearted, versatile, shrewd scapegrace, with a good deal of that worldly philosophy which was assisting in the disintegration of society, and preparing the Revolution which these comedies, by their levelling tendencies, did much to provoke and to hasten; though Beaumarchais had probably no more serious purpose than delight in his own wit. He wished to fire a squib and exploded the magazine.[2]

[1] See Lintilhac, Beaumarchais.

[2] Modern types of Figaro are to be found in Augier's "Les Effrontés" and "Le Fils de Giboyer." The political satire finds a more serious parallel in *Sardou's* "Ragabas." See Brunetière, l. c. 297.

These comedies mark a decided advance in the development of dialogue, which becomes more precise, epigrammatic, and clear-cut. Beaumarchais' sparkling *verve* is sustained in a way till then approached only by Molière, and hardly attained even by him. Indeed, it will often seem that the author is too prodigal, or that his hearers were men of quicker wits than ours; for we hardly conceive that such keenness and brilliancy should be fully valued at one reading, still less when heard but once on the stage. If it were not a paradox, one would be inclined to say that the chief fault of Beaumarchais is the monotony of his scintillating brilliancy. But, besides this, in construction and the management of intrigue, the plays touched the high-water mark of the century. "Original, incomparable, inimitable, unique," they earned an unparalleled success, and left a tradition that after four decades of woful mediocrity was revived by Hugo and Dumas, and inspired the operas of Mozart and Rossini.

This intervening mediocrity was due in great measure to the deadening effect of sentimentality,[1] and to the engrossing interest of politics. From 1789 till the end of the century, plays were more often praised and damned for their sentiments than for their merits. The history of the stage during these years is of great interest, but it belongs no longer to the history of literature.[2] Yet the drama of the century as a whole, though in no sense great, was at least superior to its poetry, and showed surer signs of the Romantic awakening.

[1] See Diderot as cited by Brunetière, l. c. 294.

[2] See Lumière, Le Théâtre français pendant la révolution; Welschinger, Le Théâtre de la révolution; and Brunetière, Études critiques, ii. 322.

During this whole period prose had been encroaching on the domain of dramatic poetry, and after its close the alexandrine enjoyed only an asthmatic revival. It is in this century that prose becomes the natural vehicle of almost every phase of thought and feeling, occupying a far more varied, vast, and important field than ever before, and for the first time surpassing verse in literary value. This is pre-eminently the century of the "philosophers," the age of scientific inquiry and of comparative study of history and institutions. And though it is true that none of these fields belongs to pure literature, many of these works show such intrinsic beauty and had such influence on imaginative prose that no literary study can ignore them.

The first of the historians of this century belongs rather to the preceding. The "Memoirs" of Saint-Simon (1678–1755) show the unreconciled feudal noble, while his treatment of language is as autocratic as though Balzac and Vaugelas had lived in vain. As a contemporary said, "Saint-Simon saw the nation in the nobility, the nobility in the peerage, and the peerage in himself." These "Memoirs," often amusing, sometimes exasperating, are always valuable for the history of their time; but they are not characteristic of its literary or intellectual movement. In Rollin (1661–1741), on the other hand, the literary instinct wholly predominated. Entirely engrossed in making himself clear and his subject interesting, he does not rise above the amiable *raconteur*. This would apply also to Voltaire's "Charles XII." and "Peter the Great;" but in his "Essai sur les mœurs et l'esprit des nations," Voltaire shows, and is first to show, a genuine effort to study the *development* of civilization under

the varying conditions of character and destiny; and thus, though he could not emancipate himself from the passions of his time nor observe without prejudice, though the age of Louis XIV. was to him "the most glorious epoch of the human mind" in spite of "the tricky and meddling clergy that marred it," though the story of Charles Martel and Roland "deserved no more to be written than that of bears and wolves," though he saw in religion everywhere and always the chief obstacle to human progress, yet he inaugurated in this essay the science of comparative history.

In this field he was almost immediately followed by Montesquieu, — a far more catholic spirit, and without a trace of the iconoclastic optimism so general in his time. Already, in 1721, his "Lettres persanes" had shown him a keen critic of contemporary society, its foibles, its government, and its creed. A more serious and truly philosophic mind appeared in his "Grandeur and Decadence of the Romans" (1734); and this was but a foretaste of the great "Spirit of Laws" (1748), where the relations of law to government, manners, climate, religion, and trade were discussed with a sweep of vision that embraced every age and country. In it all, however, Montesquieu was a student much more than a reformer, — more eager to see how what is came to be than to think how he can make it better. But though he was not himself a revolutionist, nor incited to change, his book, by calling attention to the superiority of the English constitution, had an immense and enduring influence in determining the destinies of France and of the whole Continent, which has come more and more to the constitutionalism of which he was the greatest herald.

Another historian, who left a far different impress

n the time, was Mably, whose perversely persistent xaltation of a false classicism took a hold on the pop- ılar fancy that explains much of the masquerading of he early revolutionary period. More directly political n its tone was Raynal's "Histoire philosophique des ndes," — a co-operative work, that pretends to be a olonial history and is really a demagogic declamation, of which a single example may suffice. "Cowardly people, imbecile herd," says the historian, "you are content to groan when you should roar." What must the philosophic princes have thought of this, the Austrian Joseph, the Czarina Catherine, and King Frederic, who had trusted the charmer of Ferney when he said that "the cause of the philosophers was the cause of the princes"? They might see now that the attack on the Church inevitably reacted on the divine right of royalty, and that history was only a pulpit for the "philosophers," who soon found their voices drowned by the revolutionary orators, Mirabeau, Barnave, Vergniaud, Danton, — a race silenced and superseded by the man of the 18th Brumaire.

Never have self-styled "philosophers" exercised so direct an influence on society as in France at this time. Among them Voltaire holds the chief and central place; but the radical group at his left is more witty, keen, vigorous, and loud than the conservatives who make but a poor and timid show in defence of inherited faith. This new philosophy drew its inspiration from England, chiefly from Locke; and, like him, the French metaphysicians aimed to be clear rather than profound, gliding over difficulties and aspiring to systematic completeness at the cost sometimes of common-sense. Voltaire almost boasts of his superficiality. "Throw my work into the fire," he exclaims, "if it is

not as clear as a fable of La Fontaine." Or again, "The French have no idea how much trouble I take to give them no trouble." But he was seldom anxious to push his thought to its legitimate conclusion. He used it as a solvent of old, incrusted prejudices, not as a rule of new life. He remained a deist, and showed more than once that his faith was real and not conventional. This antithesis between his philosophy and his creed bore good fruit; it made him the eloquent and successful preacher of toleration.

His successors were more consistent. Condillac forced sensationalism to a dizzy brink, where Diderot and La Mettrie nursed their pure materialism. And from this verge Helvétius and D'Holbach soon took the step that landed them in a cynical atheism which provoked a protest even from Frederic and Voltaire. But they could not banish the spirit they had conjured, a ruthless iconoclasm that found its fullest representative in the "Encyclopédie,"[1] the joint production of Diderot, D'Alembert, and most of the radical thinkers of the time. The reception given to their work amply testifies that these men were in accord with the people. The forty-five hundred copies of its twenty-eight folio volumes were hardly dry before they were sold, and the last set brought the price of rarity. Voltaire's contributions are collected in his "Dictionnaire philosophique." The articles are full of personalities and of mocking irreverence, which he seemed to think justified by the nature of his adversaries and of their cause. Yet they form some of the most characteristic and typical of his whole "hundred volumes," and are still readable in spite of the alphabetical arrangement.

[1] An admirable account of this work is contained in John Morley's Diderot, i. 113–241.

Their value, however, is literary and not philosophical, at least in any sense that we now attach to that word.

To eighteenth-century France a "philosopher" is a man disabused of all "the long results of time," a man who looks at life with shrewd but shallow common-sense. And until it was weighed, this specious optimism was naturally of immense popularity. Indeed the philosophers could truly say that the world was gone after them. The mania for collections, the dilettante study of "natural history," date from this time. Hundreds busied themselves thus with physics and chemistry, and it was especially for them that Voltaire had popularized Newton's theories in his "English Letters." In their optimistic hopefulness the puzzle of Nature seemed almost solved. Like Wagner in Goethe's "Faust," they felt they knew much and hoped to know all, — an attitude indicated by the inscription on Buffon's statue at Versailles: "A genius equal to the majesty of Nature." Indeed, as they approach the maelstrom of the Revolution, a vertigo seems to seize on these minds cut loose from the moorings of faith and drifting into unknown seas. "Enlightenment is so diffused," says Voltaire, with his genial optimism, "that there must be an outburst on the first occasion. . . . Our young men are fortunate. They will see fine things." But he looked at the matter always as an aristocrat. "As for the canaille," he said, "it will always remain canaille. I do not concern myself with it."[1] Rousseau had a truer and profounder foresight. "Rely not," he says in "Émile," "on the existing social order, forgetting that this order is subject to inevitable revolutions, and that you cannot foresee nor prevent what may come on

[1] See Brunetière, Études critiques, i. 181 sqq.

your children. The great will become small, the rich poor, the monarch subject. We approach the critical state and the age of revolutions."

Rousseau, not Voltaire, is the seer of the closing century; and he has put this startling prophecy, not in an historical or philosophical treatise, but in a novel, "Émile," which, with his "Nouvelle Héloïse," exercised a more fateful influence on mankind than any works of pure imagination that literary history knows. So we are brought back from a philosophical digression to pure literature, to the novelists and critics of the eighteenth century. Criticism may, indeed, be briefly dismissed. Voltaire is once more easily first with his "Commentary on Corneille;" but Diderot's annual "Salons" [1] were epoch-making for the rational study of art, while his dramatic essays popularized a naturalism that they did not originate, and the "Correspondence" [2] of his friend Melchior Grimm with German courts may still be read with interest for its subjective originality. Only these three influenced the future; for La Harpe, in spite of his contemporary popularity, is but the talented representative of a sterile conservatism.

In no department of literature was progress more varied or the outlook more hopeful during this entire period than in prose fiction, which was replacing the drama as the chief literary *genre*. Le Sage shares with Voltaire the honors of the first rank; but excellent work was done by Prévost, La Clos, and Louvet, in

[1] Brunetière, op. cit. ii. 285, criticises them very severely.

[2] The enterprise begun by Raynal was conducted by Grimm from 1753 to 1773, and continued by Meister till 1790. Diderot and Mme. d'Épernay also shared in it. The whole is best edited by Tourneux, Paris, 1877 sqq.

the psychological novel; by Crébillon *fils* and Restif de la Bretonne in the tale; by Du Laurens, De la Mettrie, and Diderot in the Shandyesque romance; while Marivaux furnished delightfully amusing trifles, Florian, the gentle officer of dragoons, and Marmontel, the mild pupil of Voltaire, provided didactic sugar-pills, and the Abbé Barthélemy offered a huge bolus of the same tempting character in the six stout volumes of the "Travels of the Young Anacharsis," which marks a revival of a popular interest in antiquity that is illustrated also by the poetry of Chénier. And then, with a place quite unique among the novelists of the world, is Rousseau, the prophet of the new era, of sentiment and Nature.

Le Sage, though he was no mean dramatist, was much greater as a realistic and satirical novelist, and was, indeed, the first French writer of fiction who lived, or could have lived, by his pen. Like Voltaire, he was a scholar of the Jesuits, and educated for the law; but while Voltaire drew his inspiration from England, Le Sage turned rather to Spain. The title and idea of "Le Diable boiteux," his first independent essay (1707), was borrowed from Guevara, though the work itself — in Scott's opinion, one of the profoundest studies of human character — owed more to La Bruyère. But he is less remembered to-day for this than for the equally keen and more entertaining "Gil Blas" (1715–1735), — a book singular in that it seems to belong rather to either of two foreign literatures than to its own. For while it has been recognized as a masterpiece in France, it had no roots in the past of French literature; and its form was so closely studied from the Spanish *novela picaresca*, that over-zealous Castilians have actually claimed it as a translation. And as it had no

ancestry in France, so it had no immediate posterity there, but rather in England, in the work of Defoe and Smollett, though Le Sage anticipated many features of the novel of low life and the naturalism of the school of Balzac.

In his style, Le Sage set himself against what he called the "strained diction" and "charms more brilliant than solid" of Marivaux. He wished to be clear, and, above all, not to be affected; and he moulded to his use a language very direct, terse, somewhat theatrical, but yet truly popular. If "Gil Blas," as a novel, seems at times prolix, it is because Le Sage, like a novelistic La Bruyère, is not content to show a segment of society, but seeks in the varying fortunes of his hero to reveal all its faults and foibles. But he shuns, especially in the admirable third part (1734), the exceptional, and deals with life as he knows it, and with average men, differing thus from some modern realists and from his own later work. For there is in this school always a tendency to dwell on the picturesque side of vagabond life, and to study the abnormal in vice rather than in virtue. Le Sage, indeed, has no touch of the pessimism that pervades the modern Naturalists. Acquaintance with vice is but a factor in bringing Gil to virtue. But in his closer adaptations from the Spanish, "Guzman d'Alfarache" (1732) and the "Bachelier de Salamanque" (1736), there is hardly any expression of moral sympathy at all, — a fact much more interesting than the novels themselves; for it is the first sign of that weariness of conscience and moral apathy that was presently to reveal itself in Voltaire's "Pucelle," in Diderot's "Neveu de Rameau," and in the work of the later philosophers. By this almost alone can Le Sage

be connected with the fiction of his century in France.

For the growth of the novel was rather on psychological lines. Marivaux (1688–1763), without being either a realist or a moralist, showed, in his "Spectateur," that he was a very keen analyst of human feeling; and the qualities of these essays appear also in his best novels, — "Marianne" and "Le Paysan parvenu." The former is a delicate dissection of coquetry; the latter traces the development of self-assurance and effrontery in M. Jacob, the successful and universal lover, who represents a sort of arrested development of Maupassant's "Bel-Ami," though oftener compared with Molière's "Don Juan" and George Sand's "Leone Leoni." In both novels, however, there are carefully drawn pictures of contemporary society, and some scenes of Parisian street life, that suggest the realistic vigor of Balzac. Still, it is the psychological study that absorbs Marivaux's interest and his reader's also. No writer kills off or abandons his characters with more nonchalance when they begin to embarrass him; but, even so, he has brought neither of these stories to an end. In him first we notice the pre-eminence that is given to women, and also the curious concomitance of facile shamelessness with a romantic and sublimated conventional sentimentality, — a note that runs through all the fiction of the century, reaching its height in Rousseau; a double-twisted thread that seldom fails to show itself both in the loftiest and in the basest writers.

This peculiar sentimental strain was taken up with much skill and some mixture of romantic idealism in Prévost's "Manon Lescaut" (1731), admirable in a rather nauseating kind. In a style whose simple

directness is the highest art, he tells a story in which one knows not whether to wonder most at the complacent love of the hero, who is ever ready to pardon venal infidelity, or at the deathless love of the frail heroine, who can resist all seductions but those of good wine and good clothes. As an analysis of sentimentalism degenerating to the verge of drivelling inanity, the book holds an eminence that may long be unrivalled. Still it must be admitted that both in "Manon" and in his now forgotten "Cleveland," as well as by his translations of Richardson, Prévost did much to illustrate the resources and direct the growth of romantic fiction.

Yet though "Manon" had many successors, it had no memorable ones in the early part of the century. Indeed, its closest counterpart in the intertwining of sentiment and lubricity, Louvet's "Faublas," dates from 1786. More closely resembling Marivaux, but without his depth, are the stories of society written for the amusement of an idle and corrupt aristocracy by Crébillon *fils*, son of the dramatist, and by the equally immoral but more delicate La Clos, whose "Liaisons dangereuses" is the best in this inferior kind. From amusement to instruction is not a long step; but the didactic fiction of this period, though voluminous, is not of striking excellence. It may suffice to name the "gutter-Rousseau," Restif de la Bretonne, that "genial animal" who is quite unrivalled in the serious pedagogy of his obscene sentimentality; and at the other extreme, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, in whose didactic idyls, "Paul and Virginia" and "La Chaumière indienne," sentiment reaches the acute stage of hyperæsthesia, and the ethics, like Shakspere's medlars, are "rotten before they are ripe." Bernardin,

however, by his treatment of landscape as "the background of the picture of a human life," is epoch-making in the history of the novel. His shallow sentiment reflects the growing weariness with wit and social artificiality, and was for a time immensely popular; but it was the natural result of Rousseau's teaching, and that will claim attention presently.

Meantime a new turn had been given to fiction by Voltaire, — here, as usual, a leader. He took up the *conte* where Perrault and his followers had left it, and developed from it the *tendenz roman*, the novel with a social or ethical purpose. His short tales are the most artful and insinuating controversial pamphlets that were ever penned. Self-satisfied optimism in religion and popular thought were never so pitilessly laid bare, so wittily mocked, as in "Candide" (1759); political and ecclesiastical reforms were never more effectually preached than in the "Homme aux quarante écus" (1768), with its amusing persiflage of the "single tax;" the presumption of an unspiritual established church might laugh at direct attacks, but winced at the scornful masked satire of "Zadig" (1747). No man has done so much in a bad cause with so slight weapons as Voltaire, by the indirect, gliding irony of his allusions to the Scriptures. "I will not moralize and will be read," said Byron; but Voltaire moralized more convincingly than any of his time, and was more universally read also. It is true that here, as elsewhere, he is not consistent. Perhaps he was not anxious to be. "I begin to care more for happiness in life than for a truth," he said. Intellectually, he might be a pessimist and determinist; but he knew that "the good of society demands that man shall think himself free," and he acted and preached

accordingly, — for instance in "Le Mondain" (1736) and "L'Histoire de Jenni" (1775). In this he is a utilitarian rather than a philosopher. He knows that the mass of readers will not see his inconsistency, while they will feel his keen thrusts at old abuses and creeds, and their pride will be flattered by the frank cynicism which urges them to combine with the writer to draw advantage from the superstitions of the less enlightened. Perhaps no "moralist" is at once so clear and so self-contradictory as Voltaire in these tales, where he seems now deist, now atheist, now radical, now reactionary, now pessimist, now optimist, so that the work as a whole becomes indeed "a chaos of luminous ideas."

The novel with a purpose, thus launched, found a placid cultivator in Marmontel and an eager advocate in Diderot, more consistent in design than Voltaire, but less even in execution; rising sometimes to a serious and eloquent indignation, as in "La Religieuse," then descending into the pig-sty of "Les Bijoux indiscrets," or loosing the bridle of a Shandyesque fancy in "Jacques le fataliste" and the "Neveu de Rameau," that so fascinated the attention of Goethe; or perhaps revelling in the free-lovers' utopia of the "Supplément au voyage de Bourgainville." As a modern critic, Faguet has observed, Diderot was a type of the French bourgeois, and very far from "the most German head in France," as it has been the fashion to call him.[1] He had the same facile morality, the same lack of delicacy, the same vulgar inclinations and generous emotions, the same sincerity and industry that stamp the French middle class, which was now

[1] The expression is Sainte-Beuve's. Goethe had said: "In all that the French blame in him, he is a genuine German."

first coming to the front as representative of national life. It is in his novels that Diderot shows most of this fundamentally Gallic mind. While his philosophy was a prelude to the theory of evolution, in his fiction he anticipated Rousseau's "state of nature;" and his cynicism did not shrink from the uttermost consequences of his theory, more consistent in this than his sentimental successor, who had arrived at similar conclusions by an independent and less logical process. Yet the "state of nature" is associated rather with Rousseau than with Diderot, for he preached it with a fire of sympathetic enthusiasm that made him teacher and guide of Europe for many years in a deeper sense than Voltaire had ever been, though literary criticism must rank him as the inferior genius.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) was the son of a Genevan clockmaker; yet up to his fortieth year he had no settled home or occupation, but led the wandering life of a sentimental Gil Blas, the shuttlecock of his usually generous emotions. For he had a good heart, ready to open to all, but as ready to take offence, and quick to think itself deceived. No man ever quarrelled so consistently with every one who tried to befriend him, — with Voltaire, Diderot, Hume, the Prince of Conti, and the various lady patronesses of his wanderings. He came at last to a hatred, not of the individual, but of society, which, it seemed to him, had corrupted the individual, and made him unworthy of the loving trust Rousseau longed to give. It is not the faults of human nature that grieve him, but the faults of social order against which his sensitive nature chafes. It is in literature, as in society, the revolt of individualism against the classicism of Boileau and the principles of the Bourbon monarchy. So his life

becomes a vision of what might be; a utopian imagination colors all his philosophy. It addresses itself, not to reason, but to sentiment. It is not the white light of ideas, but the glow of passionate fires. Evidence is neglected, probability scorned. The "Social Contract" assumes an origin of society that not only never was, but, *a priori*, never could be. The pedagogy of "Émile," though most valuable and suggestive, is just as impracticable and visionary. The "Nouvelle Héloïse" moves in a cloud-land of emasculate unreality; while the cynical frankness of his "Confessions" shows how his character was disintegrated by unresisted imagination, and explains his "misanthropic optimism" by his pathological condition.

Dissatisfaction with the order of society was almost universal during the latter half of the century, but, except in philosophic circles, it was inarticulate and dimly realized. Rousseau made it a popular passion, a universal enthusiasm. But the destructive influence of "Inégalité" (1755) far outweighed the constructive effort of the "Contrat social" (1762), which offered no practical remedy and, indeed, stands quite isolated in his writings; for it borrowed elements from Locke's second Essay on Government that the author hardly assimilated or understood, — elements that were inconsistent with that fundamental dogma of the "state of nature" which runs through all his later work, inspiring his "Lettre sur les spectacles" (1758) with the spirit of a modern Tertullian, and dictating the aristocratic pedagogy of "Émile" (1762).

Rousseau's theory in "Émile" is that a child should be left to develop naturally. He allows a tutor, but only to satisfy legitimate curiosity and arrange

external influence, so as to give "a positive indirect education." Even the ethics of property are to be taught by object lessons. He wishes the intellect subordinated to the sentimental affections and emotions, but he wishes the child to be isolated from other children, from adults, even from his family, since all these have some of the inherited virus of society. Goethe called "Émile" the "natural gospel of education;" and in so far as the object of all teaching is to produce independent thinking, to teach children and not facts, Rousseau proclaimed a truth always in danger of being forgotten. He was the reforming iconoclast in this field that Voltaire and Diderot were in others. He went too far. Taken literally, his "intuitive education" was a paradox; but it was a most helpful one, most timely, and most fruitful, not in France alone, but for all Europe.

In the letters of "Julie, la nouvelle Héloïse" (1761), that "Midsummer Night's Dream of a private tutor," that often suggests Goethe's "Elective Affinities," we have Rousseau's ideas on love, and naturally, therefore, his most popular work, perhaps the most influential novel that was ever written. Here he put most heart and passion, and most of his morbid personal experience. To be sure, Richardson was his obvious, almost his declared model.[1] From him he took the epistolary form, the bourgeois characters, the prolix digressions, and it was from the England that his fancy saw behind Richardson that he drew Milord Edouard, the philosophic prig, and those astonishing "English mornings," where people gathered together in gardens that art had aided nature

[1] See Texte, Rousseau et les origines du cosmopolitanisme littéraire.

to turn into nurseries of sentimentality, and there "enjoyed at once the bliss of being united and the charm of meditation" in "an immobility of ecstasy."

But what made the "Héloïse" a power was its feeling for Nature and its spirit of lyric melancholy. Here, too, Rousseau had had predecessors, — Thomson, Gray, Collins, Young, and the other sources of Ossian, — but these "common people of the skies" paled before a passion where recollections of Mademoiselle de Galley and Mademoiselle de Graffenried were fanned to new flame by the presence of Madame d'Houdetot, and interpenetrated with memories of Madame de Warens, till all became a haunting reality, to which the author sought to lend a central purpose and dignity by a defence of the home and of Christianity against his fancied enemies, the *philosophes* and *libertins*.

It is true that the situation he creates is hopelessly artificial. These connoisseurs of rare sentiments and mutual students of their own pathological psychology, these romantic self-tormentors, are so false to Nature that Rousseau can neither procure a normal climax nor suffer his characters to get on without one, but is compelled to summon a *deus ex machina* to cut the tangle in which their perverse sentimentality had involved these paradoxical people in their "enterprise against common-sense." That there were such men as Saint-Preux in this generation, no one with Werther before his eyes will deny; but it was the women of the novel, Julie and Claire, that won the book its most passionate admirers and its immense vogue among ladies, who felt that their duplex feminine nature, neglected by previous novelists, had been seized as never before. They were flattered by the eminence to which Rousseau had advanced them, and charmed by the sym-

pathy that throbbed through his pages. They knew the reality of the *âcre baiser* that so amused Voltaire. Indeed, Rousseau's women had a more defined individuality than French fiction had yet seen. In general, the book was genuine and sincere. It came from a romantic heart, and spoke to thousands of romantic hearts, who also had in rich measure the "gift of tears," in which Julie so readily dissolved. It roused in them that "general warmth" of which Jean Paul speaks, — that vague, all-embracing, ill-defined, sentimental philanthropy, which was a cause, and, still more, a directing force in the French Revolution.

"Émile" and "Julie" show sentimentality applied. The "Confessions" exhibit it as raw material. Here one is less repelled by the dogmatic undercurrent, and so can enjoy more fully the artistic charm of the apparently frank and simple narrative of his frailty and his vices, where attention is suspended with great art, events skilfully prepared, and each climax most carefully managed. These "Confessions" are probably most read to-day; but in the influence they exerted they must yield both to the novels and to "The Savoyard Vicar," a little tractate contained in "Émile," whose emotional, undogmatic, yet fervent faith is the first effectual stemming of the infidel current, and the herald of the equally emotional Christianity of Saint-Pierre, Chateaubriand, and Lamartine, as Rousseau's feeling for Nature was for that which was most original in their art.

For in all Rousseau's works there is a love of Nature, a sense of and appreciation for natural beauty, that was a revelation in French literature. Not only is there nothing before Rousseau equal to the sunrise in the third book of "Émile," or to his description

of the *pervenche*, but there is nothing to which it can be compared. He gave his countrymen a new sense. This was much; but far more important was Rousseau's assertion of the long-suppressed rights of individualism, of the *ego* in literature. As a describer of sentiments and feelings, he surpassed Prévost, as Prévost had surpassed Marivaux. Now, this is just the line of demarcation that separates the classical literature from the romantic. Sentimental religion and sentimental politics may be discredited by the logic of events, the recent literary movement may show in its naturalism more of the spirit of Diderot; but individualism, descriptions of sentiment and nature, and the mutual play of one on the other, are still the key-note of modern literature. That Rousseau struck that note, that he "emancipated the *ego*," gives him a unique place, and makes his name the most fitting introduction to the literature of the present century.

CHAPTER IV.

MADAME DE STAËL AND CHATEAUBRIAND.

: early years of the nineteenth century were unfa-
ıble to the literary development of France. The
)oleonic era did indeed nurse the childhood of
ıy whose illustrious genius bears witness to the
)tions that attended their birth, but these emotions
ıd no immediate and worthy echo. Napoleon
'ht desire to add this to his other laurels; but the
ıpeller of states could not command the flight of
ius, and the lassitude of reaction from the unbridled
rties of the Revolution invited a tyranny that soon
ad from the political to the social and literary
ere. Yet, during the twenty years that separate
i from Waterloo, two writers were in their prime
se work contains the germ of nearly every later
se of the literary development of our century.
lame de Staël and Chateaubriand are the true
types of the Romanticists, the Psychologists,
the Realists, and of the subjective and objective
)ls of criticism. And they are to such an extent
sufficient complements and supplements of one
her, that their contemporaries for the first twenty
s of the century need hardly be named in a study
he literary currents of the seventy-five years that
)w.

adame de Staël's influence on literature cannot be
sured by the popularity of her books. It is long

since any of her writings have been widely read, and they are never likely to be so. Yet there has been no generation since her time that has not felt and acknowledged the power of her fruitful thought, not in politics alone, but in literature also.

Her personality need not long detain us. She was the daughter of Suzanne Curchod, Gibbon's youthful flame, and of the Genevese banker, Neckar, the noted finance minister of Louis XVI.[1] Thus it happened that she passed her precocious youth in one of the most brilliant literary salons of Paris, where her lively intellect was stimulated, perhaps as much as her vanity, by constant intercourse with some of the keenest wits and critics of that time. Hither came Grimm, author of the "Correspondence with Foreign Courts;" here might be seen Raynal, of the philosophic and demagogic "History of the Indies;" here too, the distinguished metaphysicians Thomas and Marmontel. And here the future Madame de Staël used to sit at her mother's feet, and drink in the strong drink of the debates and discussions around her, storing up silently, like a busy bee, material for the inexhaustible conversations and stinging criticisms of a lifetime, while she nursed ambitions of a future intellectual domination over a social circle as brilliant as that which the genius of her parents had gathered.

Perhaps no girl of fifteen ever lived in the midst of

[1] She was born in 1765, and died in 1817. Principal works: De littérature, 1800; Delphine, 1802; Corinne, 1807; De l'Allemagne 1813; Révolution française, 1818; Dix années d'exil, 1821. Biography Blennerhasset, Life of Madame de Staël; Sorel, Madame de Staël (Grands écrivains français). Critical essays: Brunetière, Évolution de la critique (Leçon VI.); Faguet, Politiques et moralistes, i. 123; Pellissier, Mouvement littéraire au xix. siècle, p. 42 sqq. (cited hereafter as "Pellissier").

such a vortex of disintegrating ideas, and held the little skiff of her genius steady in the tide. In any case, Madame de Staël became so permeated with the ruling ideas of her time that she took into herself, and assimilated more perfectly, perhaps, than any other one person, the intellectual spirit of that age; and to the close of her life it is this, the last generation of the eighteenth century, that she represents, with its philosophy of progressive confident optimism and its belief in ideas and ideals. But Mademoiselle Neckar's intellectual emancipation did not hinder her from a marriage (January, 1786), dictated far more by convenience than love, with the Swedish ambassador, Baron von Staël-Holstein. Perhaps it was felt that she was not likely to make a love-match. Boisterous and vain in her girlhood, plain to the verge of homeliness from infancy to death, she was so fond of talking that a lover might have found it hard to declare his passion.[1] Even before her marriage, she had grown to be positive and self-assertive, and had written much, though she had published nothing. So, though she had three children, she kept the tenor of her independent way, and at length (1799) consented to such separation as the law then admitted. Neither husband nor wife cared at all for each other, and neither cared

[1] Sorel gives us this word-picture: "Expressive features, a complexion dark rather than fresh, yet colored and growing animate in conversation, sculpturesque shoulders, powerful arms, robust hands, as of a sovereign rather than of a great sentimental coquette, a high forehead, black hair falling in thick curls, vigorous nose, strongly marked mouth, prominent lips opened wide to life and speech, an orator's mouth with a frank, good-humored smile. All the genius shining in her eyes, in her sparkling glances, confident, proud, deep, and gentle in repose, imperious when a flash crosses them. But that that flash may shine, she needs the tripod and inspiration, — she must speak to seduce and conquer, to make herself beloved" (pp. 18–19).

that the other did not care. Though the Baron did not die till 1802, he played no part in her intellectual life.

The literary career of Madame de Staël begins with "Lettres sur J.-J. Rousseau" (1788), for whose social ideas she had then an ardent admiration, though she was too persistently optimistic wholly to comprehend them. Other literary inspiration had come to her girlhood from "Clarissa Harlowe" and from "Werther." Hence she sympathized with the Revolution till the imprisonment of the king produced a revulsion to an equally indiscreet "incivism." So she came to abuse her ambassadorial right of asylum; and fear of the consequences of this rashness led her to leave Paris shortly before the September massacres (1792), though it is not clear that she was in danger from anything but her overheated imagination.

She went to Coppet, near Geneva, and gathered there a coterie of friends and political sympathizers. Still, she did not attract the attention she thought her due; so in the next year she turned to England, and tried to make herself the centre of a more important group, though not without some personal scandal. But Paris always fascinated her; and when the fall of Robespierre (1794) permitted, she returned, and for nine years, interrupted only by brief visits to Coppet, she played a political part, though not so great a one as she imagined. Instinct led her to oppose Napoleon, and her vanity was soothed at the thought that she could irritate one who had sneered at her genius. Her separation had deprived her of diplomatic protection in 1799; but she continued to tease the Corsican with biting words, knowing that he could only exile her, and that nothing could give her so excellent a

vantage-ground from which to shoot her poisoned shafts of wit and nurse the pride of martyrdom.

In 1803 the expected order from the consular police banished her from Paris, and naturally directed her attention to Germany, which, as Richter had said, then "ruled the kingdom of the air," the land of ideas; and so, unwearied in her search for noted people to talk to, she came that winter to Weimar, where her fame as a conversationalist had preceded her. Goethe opportunely discovered that his health did not permit him to see strangers. He put her off on Schiller, a good deal to the latter's disgust; for though he found her witty and keen, she seemed to him to have little ideality or poetry and no feminine reserve. Her flow of words overwhelmed him, and when she left Weimar, "he felt," so he wrote to Goethe, "as though he had recovered from a severe illness." However, she produced a quite different impression on that rather eccentric prophet of German Romanticism, Wilhelm Schlegel, who became first a kind of literary *impresario* for her *conversazione*, then a private tutor and secretary, and an almost constant member of her household till her death. It is important to bear this in mind, for a large part of her mission was to introduce German ideas to France; and it was through Schlegel's eyes, critical indeed, but far from impartial, that she saw both the land and its literature and philosophy. Her book on Germany has suffered in consequence, as will appear presently.

Before Madame de Staël's ambition had been crowned by exile, she had written an essay of minor value on "The Influence of the Passions" (1796), and a more ambitious treatise on "Literature in its Connection with Social Institutions" (1800), that shows

the marks of her close association with the political philosopher Constant, best known for his novel "Adolphe," a forerunner of the modern psychological fiction. But her real power was first seen in "Delphine" (1802), a half-autobiographical story, that naturally deals with the unsounded mysteries of the misunderstood woman, the *femme incomprise*. But "Delphine" is hardly read now, and would be read still less, were it not for her second novel "Corinne" (1807), a story for which the travels that followed her exile furnished rich material. Here first in France the novel was made a vehicle for artistic discussion, as she found it already employed in Germany by Goethe and Richter.

In 1808 she broke finally with Constant, with whom association had brought her neither credit nor satisfaction; and during the years 1809 and 1810, with increasing religious seriousness, she refreshed her memories of Germany by extended travels there, and used the materials that she gathered then and before in her most important book, "De l'Allemagne." This she saw fit to publish in Paris, and, for fear that she might be allowed to do so uncensured, she took the occasion to write an exasperating letter to Napoleon, who was stung into confiscating the whole printed edition of a book his own censors had endorsed. The loss fell on her publisher, and, having secured the advertisement of this inexpensive martyrdom, and made Napoleon a little ridiculous by a second and more stringent decree of exile, she consoled herself at Coppet with a Swiss officer, Rocca, whom she secretly married in 1811, she being then forty-five years old and he twenty-two. Then she travelled for two years in Russia, Sweden, and England, where at length her "Germany" ap-

peared in 1813. Napoleon's fall now opened France to her again; but she remained much abroad, for her health was gradually failing, and her last book, the "Considerations on the French Revolution," was not what she would have made it ten years before. She died July 14, 1817.

The impression that Madame de Staël's personality made on her contemporaries was not attractive. Coquetry is pardoned only to beauty and youth. She was never beautiful, and she had long ceased to be young, while she still continued to urge her presence and her conversation on men of genius, who, like Schiller, found it more exhausting than admirable. Then, when well past forty, she made herself ridiculously happy by an absurd marriage. She was not personally liked, even by those who appreciated her talents; nor was she a great writer, if one considers only her language and style. It is not for either of these that she takes the large place that literary tradition accords her; it is the contents of her work that has lasting influence and value, though in important particulars even this was not original with her. Indeed, one of the most striking things about her is her inquisitive receptivity. She was always on the alert to learn from everybody, at the risk, or even with the certainty, of boring them. But this made her books a remarkable reflection of the world of thought in which she moved.

The daughter of Neckar could hardly fail to be inspired with an indestructible faith in human reason, liberty, and justice. Madame de Staël abandoned herself with her whole soul to the militant optimism of the eighteenth century. She conceived herself a prophetess of the religion of humanity; she believed

thoroughly in human perfectibility, and thought "the hope of the future progress of our species the most religious hope on earth." Virtue and happiness were her twin enthusiasms, but which held the key to the other she never clearly saw. Her genius would have placed, with her father, happiness in virtue; her imagination, with Rousseau, placed virtue in happiness.[1] Her first considerable book, the "Literature," showed "a European spirit in a French mind." It was an act of faith in the destinies of the nineteenth century based on the out-worn philosophy of the eighteenth. Even the reign of terror could not shake her placid confidence that all was for the best in the best of worlds. "How reason and philosophy constantly acquire new force through the numberless misfortunes of mankind," is her reflection, consoling or exasperating as these misfortunes of mankind happen to be ours or our neighbors'. With happy foresight she applied this thought to literature, into which she saw that the democratic spirit would bring a more energetic beauty, a more moving and more philosophic picture of the events of life. Thus she felt it would "enlarge the bounds of art;" and if that rendered the drama of Racine impossible, she, at least, shed no tears at the thought.

In this way Madame de Staël helped to liberate French literature from itself and from the self-imposed fetters of absolute critical canons. But she was also first to widen her literary ideas by contrasting and comparing them with those of contemporary Germany and England, till then much neglected, especially the German, by those who proclaimed their natural prescriptive right to enlighten the world. Her friend-

[1] See Sorel, op. cit. p. 17.

ships were studiously cosmopolitan. "From now on," she said, "we must have a European spirit." She was first to practise what she preached, and she had before her a people sorely in need of the lesson, though prepared for it also, as never before, by the attrition of the Napoleonic wars. No one has described her purpose better than herself. "The sterility with which our literature is menaced," she says, "suggests that the French spirit needs to be regenerated by some more vigorous sap;" and this she would bring to her country from beyond the Rhine. For while the French literature, as well as the Italian and Spanish, from which, till then, it had chiefly drawn, were in the main and in their spirit artistic and rationalistic, often even plastic in form and hedonistic in character, the Teutonic literatures, being less dominated by classical traditions, were more idealistic and individually subjective. Hence English and German — Ossian, Byron, Goethe, Richter, and the Schlegels — aided powerfully in the reawakening of egoism that had been begun by Rousseau. That reawakening had been the aim of the "Literature," and was the result of the "Germany." The French Romantic movement, one of the great literary regenerations in history, is in large measure the work of Madame de Staël.

But this very success is the cause of the neglect into which her works have fallen. She occupied herself much with the thought, with the ethical content of what she wrote, little with its form. But the thoughts that were new or revolutionary when she uttered them, became commonplaces the more quickly because they found general acceptance. Thus her work appealed to after generations neither by novelty nor by beauty; and so it has found ever fewer readers,

though it surpassed in breadth and fulness that of any contemporary author. She is still the only female writer of France whose talent is truly masculine. Almost every literary movement of the century can be traced back to her initiative. "She sowed the century with fertile ideas; she gave French poetry, as it were, a new soul." [1]

The books by which she did this are pre-eminently "Corinne" and "De l'Allemagne." The former shows the creative artist at the height of her development. It is "the imaginative work of a very sensitive woman, shrewd, a good moralist, and very deft in the management of intrigue. But her imagination deals only with ideas. She has an inventive, not a creative genius; she knows how to paint only herself. Take away Corinne, and there is not a living character in the story;" [2] and the most prominent are the most unreal. Her lovers are absolutely conventional; not studies of life, but visions from the dreamland of her fancy. Nor was this thought a fault by readers only a generation removed from the "Sorrows of Werther," who were still breathing the idealist atmosphere of the eighteenth century. This will explain why "Corinne," like Goethe's greater novel, should have a tragic catastrophe. The actual world will always present this aspect to the idealist, who, like Madame de Staël, spends his life in the chase of the butterfly, happiness, and has always an instinctive feeling that intellectual superiority is rather a hardship than a boon, or, in her own words, that "glory is only the bright shroud of happiness."

[1] Pellissier, Mouvement littéraire. See also Brunetière, Évolution de la critique.

[2] Faguet, Politiques et moralistes.

In "Corinne," as in "Delphine," the plot is easy, graceful, well-managed, but not strong, nor of any great psychological value. Her actors are less studies from life than characters in La Bruyère's style; and even so, they are rather typical phases of the author's own character. Her personality is ever present and overshadowing to the reader, as it probably was to the writer. But, as has been said, this was a personality with which it is difficult to feel much sympathy, and difficult not to feel some impatience. The chief value of "Corinne," then, is not psychologic, but ethical and æsthetic. Rousseau had preached the purifying influence of a return to Nature. Chateaubriand was even then urging, with all the power of his splendid eloquence, a return to the ages of faith and the sympathetic study of mediæval Christianity. As an essential balance and complement to their teaching was Madame de Staël's education of the æsthetic sense, by which a new range of emotions gained recognition in the ethical evolution of literature. "For a whole generous, romantic, and passionate generation 'Corinne' was *the* book of love and of the ideal." It is in this novel that the artistic and musical fiction of the next period had its immediate origin. Without "Corinne" there would have been no "Teverino" and no "Consuelo."

"Germany" followed up and developed the ideas of the "Literature" as "Corinne" had done those of "Delphine." But it had a far deeper effect and wider influence. For with all her unswerving sympathy with the eighteenth century, there was a side of Madame de Staël's mind that was first developed by contact with German thought, a side that otherwise might never have been developed at all. The ideas thus

evoked were so new to France that their promulgator received greater credit for originality than was her due. But whether her ideas were original or not is a matter of far less importance than that through her German Romanticism and subjectivity found a more rapid and less distorted acceptance in France than would otherwise have been possible; and thus Madame de Staël not only influenced the development of French political and philosophic speculation, but she unlocked the prison in which the lyric muse of France had pined since Malherbe had "brought her to the rules of duty;" she was the nurse, if not the mother, of the Romantic School.

"De l'Allemagne" is a book of criticism, but it is not a critical book. With one eye on Germany, she has the other fixed on France, always intent on the moral of her fable, best pleased if it can be barbed with a sting for the Corsican and his policy. So the comparison of this book to Tacitus' "Germania" is trite and obvious. But the likeness hardly extends beyond the purpose and the title. She had seen much of Germany; but Schlegel was always at her elbow, and the daughter of the Swiss Protestant had found herself more drawn to the hazy idealism of the German metaphysicians than to the truer spirit of the School of Weimar. It is not of Germany nor of the Germans that this book treats primarily or chiefly, and in the part nominally devoted to that country and its people there is least observation and most error. Philosophy and art absorb almost her entire interest. Her naïve idealism found in the nebulous metaphysics of Kant and Fichte an antidote for the cold, dry, and not very penetrating light of the French Encyclopædists. Her generous enthusiasm had been repelled by D'Holbach

and Diderot. It was drawn easily, or rather it cast itself with delight, into the vortex of Kant and Jacobi, into a deep but adventurous and audacious idealism that was prone to see things through ideas and to dissolve facts into thoughts. In this philosophy she saw her very self, her own sentiments and instincts, but conceived and expressed in a way that transcended her power to originate, or indeed wholly to comprehend and transmit. Then, too, as Heine has shown, this system was the natural result of the Protestant position, so that on this side also it appealed to Madame de Staël, who evolved from it a sort of liberal Christianity, vague and ill-defined, and as far removed from the national Christianity of France as German metaphysics from French philosophy. Thus she contributed to widen and liberalize, though hardly to strengthen and deepen, the philosophic and religious thought of the next generation in France.

But in 1804 Madame de Staël found in Germany a literature as sharply contrasted as its philosophy to that of France. Emancipated by Lessing and the vagaries of the "Storm and Stress" from foreign influences, and bonds, it was in the full bloom of its second classical period, while it was already clear that French classicism, rejected abroad, was moribund at home. Not only did the Germans allow themselves a more unrestrained subjectivity and a greater freedom both in matter and form, but there were among them two or three men of greater poetic genius than any France had seen since Molière's day. Naturally these liberties impressed her; she was no longer sure that the eighteenth century in France marked a literary advance on the seventeenth. Her theory of the drama, once narrowly French, now became broadly Aristotelian;

and even the Encyclopædist philosophy seemed now to her to have been clouded by combat, while the solitaries of the seventeenth century had had "a more profound insight into the depths of the human heart."

What, then, was her conclusion, her advice to French authors? She would have them imitate neither their own classics nor the new German stars, for she perceived, and was one of the first to grasp, the truth, that literature, to gain a hold on any people, must speak in the spirit, temper, and language of the time, not in a pseudo-classical jargon. "The literature of the ancients is among the moderns a transplanted literature. The romantic, chivalrous literature is indigenous among us; it is our religion, our institutions, that have made it blossom." She saw clearly, what Perrault and his fellows had felt dimly a century before, — that modern literature would draw from modern conditions a more natural nourishment for a healthier life.

The fundamental idea was true, and the time was opportune for its proclamation; but the example was not an adequate illustration of it. Neither in Germany nor in France was there a long and, above all, not a healthy life in store for the Romantic revival that dazzled her. She did not see that emancipation from rules could not emancipate from the fundamental laws of taste, and that German Romanticism was as factitious an imitation as pseudo-classicism had been. The true glory of German literature lay, not in the Schlegels, Richter, and Novalis, but in Lessing, Schiller, and Goethe; while German philosophy was weak from the very fact that it was not an expression of the true national spirit, but, as Goethe saw and said, "a parasite sapping the strength of the people."

"De l'Allemagne" is divided into four parts. Her

chapters on the country, the people and their ways, are neither very profound nor very accurate; yet they show an attentive observation and a ready, receptive mind, quick to see what she desired and expected to see. She gives special chapters to Berlin and Vienna, and notes the deep racial lines that separate Prussians, Saxons, Bavarians, and Austrians. Indeed, she seems here less a traveller than a student of comparative sociology, and finds herself much more at ease when she can turn from provinces and cities to books and ideas, to "Literature and the Arts," where indeed literature occupies two hundred and eighty-three pages and the arts eleven. This is the most valuable and fruitful part of the book. Partial and warped as the judgments often are, they revealed to France, and in some measure to England also, an unsuspected mine of wealth, from which foreign nations had drawn little up to that time, and have never since ceased to draw in increasing measure. It matters little that the modern reader discovers some egregious monuments of false perspective, little that she could not discern in Lessing "a dramatic author of the first rank," gave to him less space than to Werner, and to the Schlegels twice as much as to Herder. It matters little, either, that the watery Klopstock is her favorite German poet; that her criticism of the works of Schiller and Goethe accords ill with our later æsthetics; that she thinks "Don Carlos" as important as "Wallenstein," and "Egmont" the finest of Goethe's tragedies. What does matter is that she had a generous appreciation for this foreign literature, and inspired it in others, who afterward corrected her judgments. But though its shortcomings are obvious, it might be hard to find, even to-day, so just a view

of a foreign contemporary literature. "The instinct of the true and beautiful supplied the inevitable imperfection of her knowledge," though her optimistic "criticism of the beauties" tended to foster an unsystematic dilettantism.

It is possible that Madame de Staël attributed more importance to the portions of her book that treat of "Philosophy and Ethics" and of "Religion and Enthusiasm" than the event has proved them to possess. To be partial and incomplete was more dangerous here than in literature, and German metaphysicians owe her a less debt for the effort to make them intelligible to Frenchmen than they do to Cousin or to Heine. It has been said, and truly, that the history of idealism from 1780 to 1817 is in her works, but that persistently optimistic idealism was rather a survival of the eighteenth century than an anticipation of the dominant currents of philosophic thought in the nineteenth century. Nor was it a survival of what was strongest and best in that period. As Faguet observes, it had in it more of Montesquieu and of Vauvenargues than of Voltaire, little of Rousseau, nothing of Diderot. It was this partial reflection of the eighteenth century that was confirmed and revivified in her by contact with German idealism. But the effect of this attitude of mind on literature, as appears in Germany and in Madame de Staël, was to dwarf the sense for beauty of form. She, at least, had little comprehension of literary art, whether in the ancient or in the French classics. As has been aptly said, "she represents a moment when the eighteenth century in its decline no longer comprehends antique art, cares no longer for its own, guards and cherishes its philosophic ideas, which it feels will be very fruitful, and, as for a new art, *questions*, searches, doubts, waits."

For that a new art was to arise from the chaos of the Revolution, that its convulsions were to be the birth-throes of a new critical spirit, was the first article of Madame de Staël's critical creed; and the zeal of her preaching carried such persuasion that, as she had said of Rousseau, "while she invented nothing she set all on fire." And so, at a moment when France was in the glow of its new cosmopolitanism, she was able to infuse a considerable portion of the European spirit into what had been, till then, a too narrowly national literature.

But if De Staël's criticism draws its solvent power from the eighteenth century, her greatest literary contemporary, Chateaubriand, raises the standard of literary and ethical revolt from it. He joins direct issue with her comfortable theory of perfectibility, and to her deistic optimism he opposes first a skeptical, then a Christian pessimism. "Everywhere that Madame de Staël sees perfectibility, I see Jesus Christ," he writes to Fontanes in 1801; and the sentiment takes such hold on his emotions that he presently transforms himself into a sworn crusader, more jealous of the honor of the mediæval church than even of his own orthodoxy.

But there is a histrionic rift in Chateaubriand's lute, or should we say his dulcimer? In his life and in his books he poses and parades his art with a colossal egoism which seems to have overawed contemporary critics almost as much as it exasperated their successors. Napoleon is to him "the tyrant who made the world tremble, but who never made me tremble." He imagines the Emperor's daily anxiety to be to create offices that will bind Chateaubriand's proud spirit to his service. Indeed, he thinks Napoleon's

fall due chiefly to his own "Genius of Christianity." Instinctively he ranks himself as the associate, the equal, possibly the superior of that compeller of states. Hence Chateaubriand is led to attribute public interest to his private feelings, and in his books the subjectivity that the Classicists had carefully suppressed is omnipresent and confessed. Thus he contributed essentially to the revival of egoism in literature that resulted from the teachings of De Staël. All his heroes are but Chateaubriand in thin disguise. His Christianity is a personal sentiment, not a product of universal reason. What made him a knight of the cross was not the stern beauty of truth, but the poetry of what seemed to his youth a lost cause and the mystic charm of mediæval legend. Even in his account of a journey to Jerusalem, the thrilled pilgrim will exclaim: "I weep, but 't is to the sound of the lyre of Orpheus."

Though both De Staël and Chateaubriand were aristocrats, they were strongly contrasted in their lives, and so supplemented each other in their literary influence. She owed her birth to Protestant Switzerland, he to profoundly Catholic Brittany.[1] And in his boyhood everything combined to nurse a spirit opposed in all ways to that which animated Madame Neckar's Parisian salon. He has told us himself, in a most

[1] Born at Saint-Malo, 1768; died, 1848. Works in order of time: Essai sur les révolutions, 1797; Atala, 1801; Génie du christianisme, 1802; Atala et René, 1805; Les Martyrs, 1809; Itinéraire d'un voyage de Paris à Jérusalem, 1811; then political pamphlets till the collected edition of his works, 1826–1831, which contains the "Natchez" and the "Abencerrages;" Mémoires d'outre-tombe, 1849–1850.

Critical appreciations in Lanson, p. 868; in Faguet, xix. siècle; in Brunetière, Évolution de la poésie lyrique, p. 83; and Évolution de la critique, p. 180. The biographical literature is cited by Lanson.

effective passage, how the warm and simple piety of his mother, the distant reserve of his father, the mysterious vastness of the neighboring ocean, the strange legends of that simple and childlike people, combined to foster in him the poet and the mystic, and to evoke the religious sentiment.

In Brittany he passed his childhood. For his education he went to Dol and Rennes, towns not too distant to break the Breton spell. He entered the army at twenty, and was tempted to try his fortune in India, a land attractive to his imaginative temperament. But the Revolution diverted him from this project, and presently sent the young enthusiast to the opposite side of the globe. In 1790 he went to America on a government commission, ostensibly to seek the Northwest Passage, which, however, he neither found nor sought. But his journey was far from fruitless to himself or to France; for he travelled, though not perhaps so extensively as he implies, among the great lakes and prairies of the West, and amid the luxuriant vegetation of semi-tropical Florida, stimulating his vivid imagination by intercourse with Indian tribes and by the solitude of primeval forests. These influences first revealed the poet to himself, and were in their turn revealed in all his future works, but most brilliantly in "Natchez," in "René," and in "Atala."

Chateaubriand, with a considerable part of the nobility of France, sympathized with the early efforts of the Revolutionists, for he was convinced that political reform was a necessity. But the excesses of 1791 and 1792 sobered his enthusiasm on his return to France, where his parents arranged for him a hasty and unhappy marriage. This, together with the execution of the king, made him cast his lot with the party of the

émigrés, though he was not then or ever wholly in sympathy with the policy of reaction that they represented. But the hopes of the Bourbons were presently crushed at Valmy; and Chateaubriand, sick and wounded, went to England, where he remained till 1800. These seven years of exile could not but have some effect on his literary and ethical views, but he learned much less in England than Voltaire or Beaumarchais had done. He supported himself by translating, and found leisure to write a somewhat pessimistic and skeptical essay on "Revolutions," which is interesting for its youthful declaration of independence from the smug optimism of Condorcet. It was in England, too, that he elaborated "Natchez," "René," and "Atala," in which American Indians are idealized in the spirit of Bernardin's "Paul and Virginia" and Rousseau's "natural state." Therefore in substance all of them lack reality, while in form they hover between poetry and prose in a way that may repel modern taste, but greatly fascinated that of his time.

Though these books were begun before the publication of the "Essay on Revolutions," there is a change to be noted in their ethical position that appears most clearly in his attitude toward Christianity. The "Essay" of 1797 was coldly skeptical; in 1801 "Atala" was warmly sympathetic. This change Chateaubriand attributes to the death of his mother, in 1798; but he is not always a trustworthy witness about himself. He mingles, like Goethe, "fiction and truth;" but, unlike Goethe, he does not say so. Still, however that may be, "Atala" struck a note that set all hearts vibrating; it won immediate and universal popularity. The eloquent descriptions of nature showed that the

author had rare powers of minute observation, and the use that he made of it roused the dormant spirit of romantic idealism. It gave expression to a mental state that had not yet found a voice in France; it anticipated much in Lamartine and in Hugo. At the opening of the century Chateaubriand had no important rival; and even when Madame de Staël claimed a place beside him, he seemed still the leading figure in French letters till Lamartine charmed the world with the fascinating anodyne of his "Meditations."

Encouraged by the reception of "Atala," he brought the "Genius of Christianity" to a close just at the moment (1802) when Napoleon was on the eve of his official recognition and restoration of the National Church, which, indeed, had been practically restored since 1796. Chateaubriand's book has been called, and is, a brilliant bit of special pleading; but none the less it served its purpose and Napoleon's. To discuss its author's real convictions is beside our purpose. He himself thought his mind "made to believe in nothing, not even in itself; made to disdain all, — grandeurs, pettinesses, peoples, kings; and yet dominated by a rational instinct of submission to all that was beautiful, — religion, justice, equality, liberty, glory." Hence one might infer that it was an æsthetic rather than a moral attraction that drew him to the Christian Church, into which he could thus carry his pessimism and, indeed, his fundamental skepticism, while all the time he was probably as sincere as he knew how to be, and only gave a striking illustration of the price that rational beings must pay for sentimental emotions. Logical consistency was never his prominent characteristic, nor is reason the pole-star of the "Genius of Christianity." But though its argu-

ment is often puerile, its passion and its eloquence carried it quickly to the hearts of a public weary of the dead-sea fruit of Encyclopædist philosophy, a public whose languid will to believe could be more easily thrilled by rhetoric than moved by reason. Author and readers were less interested to find that Christianity was true than that it was sentimentally poetic, beautifully pathetic, artistically æsthetic.

This book won Chateaubriand a diplomatic post in Rome, but his intriguing spirit made it necessary to transfer him to Switzerland; and after the execution of the Duc d'Enghien he resigned all diplomatic preferment and criticised Napoleon freely, exposing himself to more than he actually suffered, though his oration at his reception to the Academy occasioned a brief exile, and a newspaper[1] that he controlled was suppressed. This check to his political activity re-aroused in him the spirit of travel, but not till he had discovered and proclaimed in "René" that *maladie du siècle*, the morbid toying with melancholy that had inspired "Werther" in Germany, and spread its contagion to England in "Childe Harold." Having left this virulent bacillus behind him, Chateaubriand set out on an Eastern journey; visited Greece, Turkey, Asia Minor, Palestine, and, on his return, Tunis and Spain, carrying with him everywhere the same keen but mournful eye that had seen such vivid and sombre pictures in the American forests and prairies, and the same imagination that had shed a romantic halo over all.

The direct result of this trip was the "Narrative of a Journey from Paris to Jerusalem;" but he first embodied his impressions in "Les Martyrs," which, in-

[1] "Le Mercure," founded in 1807.

deed he began before setting out on his journey. This is a prose epic of rising Christianity and sinking paganism, that carries its action from the Orient to Gaul, and reaches its climax in the amphitheatre at Rome. "The Last of the Abencerrages," printed in 1826, was also a belated fruit of this journey. Indeed, practically all the work of Chateaubriand that is still read with pleasure, or with curiosity that it should have excited pleasure, is included in the eleven years 1801–1811. With the fall of Napoleon, his activity as an ethical and imaginative writer yields almost wholly to the demands of party politics, while the purely literary work that then appeared was only what prudence had withheld from the censors of the Empire.

Yet in its sphere this political writing is closely parallel in its methods and in its effect to the former; it shows the same "opulence of imagination and poverty of heart." His first production in this field, "Buonaparte and the Bourbons" (1814), is a sort of "Genius of Royalty" modelled on the "Genius of Christianity." Louis XVIII. thought its bitter eloquence and hate worth a hundred thousand men to the Legitimist cause. But here, as there, his feeling has more sentimental warmth than logical consistency. He tells us himself that in 1826, in spite of all he had suffered for the House of Bourbon, he was still thought a doubtful Christian and a dubious Royalist. Hence it is not surprising to find that he was as inconvenient to his friends when in power as to his enemies when in opposition. Various diplomatic posts were abandoned for vigorous pamphlet wars on the ministries he disliked, and at the close of the Restoration period he seemed drifting toward the liberal party. But a

pessimist is not happy to be in the majority, and the triumph of the Orleanists brought him back promptly to the defence of the lost cause. "I cannot serve passions in their triumph," he had said. "Always ready to devote myself to the unfortunate, I understand nothing of prosperity." These sentiments were certainly characteristic and possibly sincere; those who wept over "René" thought them noble and edifying. But as he realized the hopeless case of the Legitimists, he gradually lost heart, and toward the close of his life, though he was still the lion of literary salons, he sank into a discouraged silence, occupying his gloomy mood with translating "Paradise Lost" and writing a life of the ascetic Rancé. He revised and completed also his "Memoirs from beyond the Tomb," —"René with documentary evidence," as it has been wittily called, —a work of quite unique conceit and much political prejudice, but yet of remarkable eloquence and some historic interest. He died on the fourth of July, 1848, in the midst of a social revolution that must have shrouded his pessimism in still deeper gloom.

The literary significance of Chateaubriand is to be sought in "Atala," in "René," in the "Genius of Christianity," and in the "Martyrs;" and to understand their effect it is necessary to bear in mind somewhat of their contents. "Atala" is a short idyl of a young Indian girl of that name, who loves Chactas, an Indian captive among her nation. But she is a Christian, and has sworn to her mother a perpetual virginity. Their tale is told by Chactas to René-Chateaubriand as they float together down the broad Ohio. This thoroughly romantic Indian has been in Europe, and has a nature of strangely wedded culture and savagery. A solitary

missionary, Father Aubry, completes the *dramatis personæ* of the little tragedy, where duty conquers love, but only by the sacrifice of the life of the gentle heroine. The simple and solemn pathos of the story came like a new birth to men whose ears were dulled with the verses of Delille, and its austere Christianity was a revelation to those who had so long filled their bellies with the husks of Voltaire and Diderot. Slighter even than Goethe's "Werther," it had a renown almost as wide and as lasting. It was translated into the chief languages of Europe, and is said to have found its way into the very penetralia of the Sultan's seraglio.

"Atala" is certainly untrue to savage nature; its pathos is artificial, but its publication is a date of importance in French literature, for it marks the beginning of the Romantic School. The danger was felt instinctively by the Classicists, who bitterly attacked its æsthetics; for though it was restrained in comparison to later works of Romantic imagination, they saw that it was inconsistent with the spirit of the eighteenth century, even more than with that of the seventeenth. And the work of Chateaubriand that followed only intensified this antagonism; for what is involved in "Atala" is made the central thesis of the "Genius of Christianity," his most ambitious effort, both literary and ethical, though the elaborate table of contents prefixed to that work promises a more logical treatment than the book realizes, while the apparatus of Defence, Letters, Notes, and Explanations at the close, suggests a learned treatise rather than an oratorical plea.

The dogmas and doctrines of Christianity are first discussed; then its poetry, its art and literature, and

its worship. Each part, too, has the appearance of rigid analysis. Thus the second elaborately compares classical and Christian poetry, and closes with an antithetical study of the Bible and Homer. Each section, also, is analyzed. If the apologist is contrasting pagan and Christian character, he speaks first of husbands and wives, then of fathers, mothers, sons, daughters, priests, and warriors; and in every case he finds that the Christian author has refined and embellished the classic ideals. The true faith is also the more beautiful and the more sympathetic. But if this description applies to a great part of the "Genius," the author rises also at times to veritable theological dithyrambics, as when, for instance, he undertakes to prove the existence of God from the marvels of Nature; and some of his finest passages are descriptive panegyrics, such as the remarkable chapters on the Mass that open the concluding part, or the subsequent section on Christian missions, where the little story of "Atala" may have had its original place.

Such a book draws more from imagination than from reason, and appeals to the emotions more than to the sober sense of its readers. Here one is asked to consider "whether the divinities of paganism have poetically the superiority over the Christian divinities" (l. iv. ch. 4). Here *foi* (faith) is commended for its supposed connection with *foyer* (hearthstone); the three Graces are adduced to prove the Trinity, and teleology finds its reduction to the absurd in the migration of birds precisely at the time when they are convenient for human food, and in the assumption that "domestic animals are born with exactly enough instinct to be tamed." Yes, Chateaubriand will offer the constellation of the Southern Cross as a witness of

Christianity, and defend the celibacy of the clergy by Malthus' Law! And yet the student of literary evolution will perceive that it is just such a revindication of the rights of sentiment that was a necessary condition of the revival of the personal forms of literature, and especially of lyric poetry. It is the spirit of the "Genius" that inspires the first utterances of Hugo and Lamartine. Chateaubriand supplements and continues the protest of Rousseau's "Savoyard Vicar" against the Gradgrind materialism of the Encyclopædists.

"René" had formed part of the "Genius;" but it had closer affiliations with "Atala" than with Christianity, and was reprinted separately in 1807, possibly, as has been suggested, to induce those to read it who would not read the "Génie," and those to read the "Génie" who did not care to find "René" there. This mouthpiece of Chateaubriand's dilettante pessimism had been the supposed narrator of "Atala," and the scene is once more laid in the primeval forests of the Mississippi valley. Chactas reappears; and there is a mission priest, more human than Aubry, who speaks for Chateaubriand the Christian idealist, while René exhibits the *blasé* aristocrat, nursing his world-pain like another Werther.

This disconsolate young man had passed most of his boyhood "watching the fugitive clouds" and listening to the rain. He had a sister[1] who presently turned nun, but natural inconstancy aided prejudice to divert him from a like design. He nursed the germs of melancholy amid the ruins of Greece and Italy. Modern civilization accentuated his idle *ennui*. He sought the gentle children of Nature, the Indians of

[1] Obviously studied from Chateaubriand's own sister Lucile, who died in 1804.

French Louisiana, who, more sensible and happy than he, had let life slip by, "seated tranquil beneath their oaks," their only melancholy an excess of bliss that they checked by a glance at heaven. Still, brief experience sufficed to convince him of his incompatibility even with this society; and he renounced all intercourse, save with Chactas and the priest, to whom he related his "secret sentiments" and the "languid struggles" of his "Romanesque spirit" against the necessary evil of life.

It is these "secret sentiments," of which those of René's sort had always enough and to spare, that were the charm of "René," and the literary source and origin of the paralysis of the will nursed by vain dreams, that *maladie du siècle* that has sicklied o'er the thought of so many in France who seemed capable of better things, — of Lamartine, of De Vigny, and in another way of De Musset and the young George Sand. It blights the Joseph Delorme of Sainte-Beuve and the Antony of Dumas. It may be traced also, though masked by the stronger power of Byron, in the dramas of Victor Hugo.

This little tale of morbid, introspective pessimism struck a note that swayed the whole fabric of society by the responsive vibrations that it awakened. It did this because, though it was unnatural, it was genuine. The book was affected, but so were the man and the age. If René tells us that "people weary him by dint of loving him," the private correspondence of Chateaubriand is full of the same aristocratic melancholy, full of assurances that he is "quite *blasé* and indifferent to everything but religion," dragging dreamily his *ennui* with his days, and crying for some one to deliver him from the "insane impulse to live." That sigh of Job,

"My soul is fatigued with my life," is the burden and refrain of "Natchez."

"Les Martyrs" exhibits the "Genius" applied to Romantic fiction. In a cadenced style and epic diction that need only rhyme and metre to make a poem, Chateaubriand has contrasted the morals, sacrifices, and ceremonial of pagan and Christian worship in the times of Diocletian. Here the reader may find "the language of Genesis beside that of the Odyssey," and see "the Jupiter of Homer beside the Jehovah of Milton." But Chateaubriand has fallen into the snare that is stretched for every historical novelist. Not only has he forced chronology and geography in his zeal to include the principal characters of the ante-Nicene church, but he has enlarged his scope so that he takes in the *philosophes* of the eighteenth century, and even the French Revolution. Julian the Apostate reaches the hand to Voltaire, and Homer to Volney. The result, as his most generous critic has admitted, is a grandiose failure, composite and artificial, original only when it gives up the vain attempt to imitate Dante and Milton, and abandons the religious epic for the historical novel. But even here the author staggers a little under the weight of his antiquarian lore. He seems intent on describing the whole of the then known world, from Rome to the Thebaid and from the Netherlands to Arcady; and in later editions he fortified the book with prefaces, analyses, and notes, that might find a more appropriate grave in the "Revue des questions historiques." In its day, however, the book was repeatedly reprinted, and critics still couple the name of its hero, Eudore, with Corneille's Polyeucte, to prove how narrowly false it is to exclude, with Boileau, "the terrible mysteries

of the Christian faith" from the realm of literary art.

The "Journey from Paris to Jerusalem" illustrates from another side the same combination of fiction and guide-book, of pseudo-Christian and crypto-pagan. Here the weary dilettante grows dejected at Troy, and discouraged over the past glories of Sparta and Athens, while he nurses his mind to a proper desolation for the ruins of Jerusalem, Egypt, and Carthage. His powers of natural description, always remarkable, are here at their height; and the sea proves a fruitful inspiration to his mournful muse; but even the best passages are marred by intrusive subjectivity, by what he calls "the secret and ineffable charms of a soul enjoying itself." The "Journey" is Chateaubriand's most cited work; but the citations are almost wholly confined to the objective part of the book, his descriptions of Nature and historical evocations.

This brings us to speak of one of the most important and enduring results of Chateaubriand's writing. He is the first recreator of the past, the inspirer of the modern popular historian. He first drew attention to the literary mine that lay hid in the middle ages and in Christian antiquity, treasures exploited almost too eagerly by the Romanticists. "Imagination," he had said, "is to erudition the scout that is always reconnoitring." In his hands history became poetry, revealing new possibilities to the student and new fields to literature. The exact studies of his predecessors may have contained the truth; it was reserved for this artist to make that truth live again. But Chateaubriand was also the founder of the modern descriptive school; and he was able to be this, because, as we have seen, he added to his love for the

ages of faith a naïve paganism, so that, as some one has wittily observed, "his pilgrim staff changed occasionally into a thyrsus." From this pagan element came an increased love of Nature, an affectionate study of her moods as minute as that of Bernardin, with an idealization and personification of her changing beauties that suggest Ossian and presage the Romantic School, of whose advent there had already been signs in Rousseau, Buffon, and Saint-Pierre. But Chateaubriand was first in France to describe scenes with a vivid imagery that conjured before the mind horizons such as his readers had never seen. Whether these horizons were true or false, whether his classic Greece or his Merovingian France or his Natchez Indians had anything in history or in fact to correspond to them, is from a literary point of view wholly indifferent. It is enough that they gave a vivid sensation of novelty, and opened all history and nature to the poetic vision of the next generation, as the "Genius of Christianity" had already opened the treasures of its historic faith. Without Chateaubriand it is as hard to conceive Thierry or Michelet as it is Flaubert or Loti.[1]

If it was Chateaubriand's ambition "to rival Rousseau and ruin Voltaire," he undertook tasks both of which were beyond a man who had neither the robust faith of the one, nor the mocking confidence of the other. And yet he marks the close of a period of literary evolution that had begun with the Pleiad two centuries and a half before, and he marks also the beginning of a new era. He, probably more than De Staël, persuaded the new generation that it was safe to break with tradition, with those imitations of imitations that

[1] Chateaubriand's influence on lyric poetry is discussed by Brunetière, Évolution de la poésie lyrique, i. 83–96.

had been sapping the life of French literature since the close of the seventeenth century. He convinced them of what she had taught by implication, — that, since literature must be in touch with the people, French literature, if it would be to France what Greek and Latin were to Greece and Italy, must be national in its aspirations and Christian in its spirit. But to do this was to point the way to the greatest literary achievements of the next generation.

This has been clear to nearly all the French critics that have followed. "He changed," said Villemain, "in the moral order a part of the opinions of the century; he brought back literature to religion, and the religious spirit to the spirit of liberty; he has been a renovator in imagination, criticism, and history." This may seem an exaggeration; and yet Sainte-Beuve is, perhaps, too cautious when he damns him with faint praise as "the most striking of his contemporaries at the beginning of the century," for Nisard is willing to grant him "the initial inspiration as well as the final impulse of all the durable innovations of the first half of the century in poetry, history, and criticism;" and Brunetière is constrained to admit that he held for those decades "a literary royalty comparable only to that of Voltaire." So there was a measure of truth in Fontanes' bold words to Napoleon, that Chateaubriand shed glory on his reign; and in the tribute of the historian Thierry, who, writing in 1840, declares that all the typical thinkers of the century "had met Chateaubriand at the source of their studies, at their first inspirations. Not one but should say to him, as Dante to Virgil: 'Thou leader, thou lord, and thou master.'"

Thus in Chateaubriand and in Madame de Staël we

should recognize not only the beginning, but the source of the literary evolution of our century. From her came its new ideas, from him its new art. His style has left its mark on French poetry, history, fiction, on the very language itself. To George Sand he seemed "the greatest writer of the century." De Vigny and Hugo, Flaubert and Leconte de Lisle, even Lamartine, saw in him their model, "the incomparable artist." It was not till Naturalism rose with its cold, white light that his star began to wane.

CHAPTER V.

THE ROMANTIC SCHOOL.

In 1823 a company of English actors undertook to present in Paris the masterpieces of Shakspere. They were hissed, hooted; an angry spectator shouted that Shakspere was the aide-de-camp of Wellington; others translated their feelings into action, and threw at the stage such missiles as came to hand with so much violence that an actress was injured. To hate England was the A B C of patriotism; Germany was hardly more popular, and a literary reform that seemed to savor of either was condemned in advance. It is harder for the conquered to be generous than for the conqueror; and in the years that followed Waterloo, those who preached a narrow nationalism in literature, the classicism of the seventeenth century as interpreted by the eighteenth, had an easy task in rousing the prejudices even of the cultured.

Yet already there were signs of change in popular feeling. While the Classicists diligently ploughed and harrowed their sterile fields and reaped their stunted crops, the younger generation was dissatisfied and restless. At first the spread of these feelings was checked by a curious though not unnatural coincidence. Up to that time the liberals in politics had been reactionaries in literature, while the literary reformers handicapped their cause with a sentimental devotion to throne and altar. One sees this in the newspa-

pers of the time; but, best of all, in Hugo's youthful poems — "his follies before he was born," as he used to call them — and in his Royalist "Odes and Ballads." Something of the same spirit can be found in all the future leaders of the Romantic School. Thus, for a time, independence and individualism in literature became identified with mediævalism and the ultra-Catholic Restoration. But it was soon seen that this connection was purely fortuitous. In the year after the English actors had been driven from the stage, the foundation of the "Globe" newspaper testified that the new spirit accorded with the most ardent patriotism; and prejudice was hardly dispelled before writers of the younger school — Thierry, Thiers, Guizot, and Mignet in history, Cousin in philosophy, Lamartine and Hugo in poetry — showed to the world that the genius of France was ready to break with its outworn past.

Several elements combined to make these years favorable to a revolt from tradition. The rising generation had passed their youth in a time when classical studies and the amenities of literature were neglected or obscured by the rush of events and the glories of the Empire. The energies nursed in a time of action were directed now to the field of imagination, and claimed a broader scope than had sufficed for their elders.[1] This movement of the world-spirit was by no means confined to France, and the cosmopolitanism that had been preached by De Staël aided it by translations from the English and German Romanticists. As early as 1809 Constant had adapted Schiller's

[1] So Hugo says: —

Nous froissons dans nos mains, hélas inoccupées,
Des lyres à defaut d'épées,
Nous chantons comme on combattrait.

"Wallenstein" to French taste; Schlegel's "Lectures on Dramatic Literature" were translated in 1814, and in the same year the Spanish "Romance of the Cid" was done into French. A little later Raynouard edited an anthology of the Troubadours, and Scott's essay on them was translated. In 1821 Shakspere and Schiller were turned into French, and Byron soon followed, with such a numerous company of works of like tendency that enumeration is at once tedious and superfluous.[1]

The ferment of independence spread rapidly. All the young men were for liberty, and their talents made them each year more and more the lions of the literary salons, while the conservative "periwigs" grew less supercilious and less confident. In 1827 the tide had set so decidedly that the season's dramatic success was achieved by a company of English actors, among them Kean, Macready, and Kemble; and in December of that year the impression of their performances was fixed and formulated by Hugo's profession of dramatic faith in the preface to his "Cromwell." From this point to 1830 the Romantic emancipation of the *ego* makes a constant crescendo culminating in the epic conflict in which Hugo's "Hernani" served as a modern body of Patroclus, till the Revolution of July (1830) crowned the Romanticist triumph. For literary reform was now wholly identified with the liberal movement in politics, while the reactionaries had become involved in the popular condemnation that swept away the Legitimist throne. After 1830 the emancipation of individualism had only itself to fear. It could develop unchecked on the stage and in the press. But

[1] See Lanson, Littérature française, p. 916, for further titles, and also Brunetière, Études critiques, i. 279.

its unchallenged rule was very brief; indeed, as a system, it passed into history with the fiasco of Hugo's "Burgraves" in 1843. Yet it has never ceased to be an all-pervading influence in the whole period that follows. It has fostered and almost transformed the study of history; it is the inspiration of the modern novel of whatever shibboleth.[1]

A school implies a master and rules or principles; but it is hard to say who was the master or what were the rules of this group of writers who asserted so vigorous a life and enjoyed so brief a triumph. Hugo is greatest among them; but he is not a master, for the very essence of the movement lies in the free scope that it claims for the development of individuality in the assertion of the rights of imagination, whose wings reason had clipped since Malherbe's day. Their early strength, the bond of their cohesion, lay in the protest against what they thought the mummeries of Classicism, and men might share this who shared nothing else. Hence we find sculptors and painters among the foremost to "respond to Hernani's horn," for they felt that dramatic liberty involved their own. They could be rallied for any attack on artistic conventions. The very first verse of "Hernani" was meant and taken as a challenge to metrical precedent; and repeated contemptuous allusions to old age in the same piece voiced a like sentiment. The iconoclasts were as extreme as the conservatives. Shouts of "Down with Racine!" enlivened the theatres; while Gautier, with a band of long-haired, youthful enthusiasts, danced a saraband around the

[1] See Brunetière, Époques du théâtre français, 340, and Zola, Romanciers naturalistes, p. 376, who complains, there and elsewhere, that he cannot get his feet out of the Romantic snare.

statue of that courtly tragedian before the faces of a shocked bourgeoisie.

Behind this impatience of control, the unreasoning self-assertion of youth conscious of its strength and over-sanguine of its powers, there was a calmer and more reasoning desire for a freer expression of emotion and art, especially in lyric and dramatic poetry. It was, then, in the nature of the movement that each genius should develop independently. Hugo, the greatest of them, will demand a place apart. Others, like Stendhal, appear more fitly among the precursors of Naturalism; others, like Sainte-Beuve, among the critics of the century. The school, if one may call it so, had its nucleus in Charles Nodier (1783–1844), a fanciful and romantic sentimentalist, with whom were associated first De Vigny and the Deschamp brothers, then Lamartine, Hugo, and Sainte-Beuve, who has described this "Cénacle," for so they called themselves, as "Royalists by birth, Christians by *convenance* and a vague sentimentality." Their first organ was the "Muse française;" and their aim was to nurse and rouse the old monarchical spirit, the spirit of mystery and spiritual submission, as we find it voiced in Lamartine's "Lac" and "Crucifix," in De Vigny's "Eloa" and "Moïse," and in Hugo's early "Odes and Ballads."

In form, however, these men soon came to demand the fullest independence. They avoided imitation even of the most admirable work; they would not put their new wine into old bottles. And presently, in the exigencies of controversy, they began to claim that even in their own day the Classicists had not represented the people, — a view that had far-reaching results; for this democratic impulse, once stirred,

turned the school slowly but surely from legitimacy to liberalism, from the Bourbons and the Orleanists to the Revolution and Napoleon. Lamartine sings of universal emancipation; Hugo, of the Vendôme Column.[1] These wider sympathies won them a wider popularity, and drew to them, even before the Revolution of July, the valuable alliance of De Musset, Mérimée, and the elder Dumas; and to these were added a little later the distinguished names of Gautier and Gérard de Nerval.

The Romantic movement owed much to England, more probably to Germany, most of all in its ideas to De Staël, in its æsthetics to Chateaubriand, in whom all unite to admire the incomparable artist. Hugo, at fourteen, resolves to be "Chateaubriand or nothing."[2] So far as Romanticism is the declaration of literary individualism, the negation of classical dogmatism, it is in large measure the result of "L'Allemagne;" but from its positive side, in its reassertion of the rights of imagination, it is far more the revival of the emotions of Christianity in a society whose fearful experiences had inspired a will to believe without altogether satisfying its reason. Christianity to these Romanticists is not the robust faith of Bossuet, but the lassitude of men weary of negation, seeking food for a re-aroused spiritual nature. To this mental state the "Genius of Christianity" was a revelation of beauty and art. "The cross raised by Chateaubriand over every avenue of human intelligence," to borrow Hugo's phrase, cast its shadow over the "Odes and Ballads," which palpitate with a medi-

[1] Contrast, in the "Odes et Ballades," book i. 11 and ii. 4 with iii. 3, 5, 6, 7.

[2] V. Hugo raconté, ii. 106 (July 10, 1816).

æval faith; it inspires the spiritualism of Lamartine and the young De Vigny; and if De Musset seems rather to echo the eighteenth century, it is no longer with the confident sneer of Voltaire.

This spiritualism combined with that individualism to foster a literary subjectivity; and to this also De Staël and Chateaubriand had pointed the way. Now, any attempt "to realize beauty by the expression of character," unless it is upborne, as in Hugo, by colossal egoism, is apt to become introspectively morbid, melancholy, pessimistic, loving best, like Coleridge's Genevieve, "the songs that make her grieve," and so in sharp contrast to the objective optimistic calm of the Classicists. There is a tendency to flee from the grievousness of life to the sentimental contemplation of Nature, after the manner of Rousseau and Bernardin, to seek solitude where Classicism had sought life. Hence these writers nurse their emotions on the mediæval Christian past, while Greece and Rome had been more sympathetic to the School of 1660 and to the eighteenth century. But in substituting national traditions and Christian legends for the ancient and pagan ones, the Romanticists first brought literature in touch with the masses of the people.

Such are the general characteristics of Romanticism; but no writer reflects all its phases, nor were all equally imbued with its spirit. This finds its most natural expression in lyric poetry, which it is well to study before considering the effect of Romanticism on the drama and fiction.

First in time among the poets are Béranger, who cannot be reckoned as in full sympathy with the movement, and Lamartine, who drew away from it after his early successes. These may serve to intro-

duce an attempt to show the evolution of Romantic poetry as it appears in the verses of De Musset, De Vigny, and Gautier. Béranger, in a vast number of songs that deal with love, wine, politics, and especially with Napoleon, whose legend he did much to establish, continues the song-writers of the eighteenth century, though he is far more cleanly and much more popular. It is as impossible for him as for them to be wholly serious. A spice of Gallic mockery lurks even in his songs of patriotism and democracy, though he strikes here his deepest and most original notes.[1] Perhaps Béranger was too democratic in his nature and convictions to develop a truly independent lyric individuality. His belief in the wisdom of the majority is almost a creed; but this insured his acceptance by the multitude. He reflects faithfully the temper of the great middle classes; and these maintain his popularity to-day because they find in his verses the completest echo of their own Voltairianism, a hero-worship spiced with *blague*, and love of good-cheer, while they are not offended, as more cultured men might be, at his mannerisms of language and style.

Lamartine, on the other hand, is pre-eminently an aristocrat both by birth and instinct.[2] He, too, was no thorough-going Romanticist, but he made great and

[1] E. g., Le Vieux drapeau, La Bonne vieille, L'Alliance des peuples. See Sainte-Beuve, Portraits contemporains, i. 60.

[2] Born 1790; died 1869. His principal volumes are — Poetry: Méditations, 1820; Nouvelles méditations, 1823; Harmonies poétiques et religieuses, 1830; Jocelyn, 1836; La Chute d'un ange, 1838; Recueillements poétiques, 1839. Prose: Voyage en Orient, 1835; Histoire des Girondins, 1847; Graziella, 1852.

Criticism: Sainte-Beuve, Portraits contemporains, i. 190; Brunetière, Poésie lyrique, i. 107, and Histoire et littérature, iii. 239; Faguet, xix. siècle, p. 73; Rod, Lamartine (Classiques populaires); Descharnel, Lamartine; Lacretelle, Lamartine et ses amis.

essential contributions to the lyric evolution of that school. He was of old Royalist family, and had the education of a Catholic noble. After the Restoration he entered the army, which he soon exchanged for the diplomatic service, though not until he had published the "Meditations," — verses that accorded less with the profession of arms than with the weary temper of this time of exhaustion, the to-morrow of Waterloo. Its success showed how completely it expressed the state of mind of cultured France. Forty-five thousand copies were sold in less than four years. That Lamartine was happily married in 1822, and busied with diplomacy till 1830, seemed rather to foster than check his sentimental melancholy. After the Revolution of July, he made a journey to the Orient, and returned in 1833 to take an active part in politics, where his oratory earned him distinction, and his generous though unpractical patriotism won him esteem. In 1848 he withdrew from the Republic, of which he had been the quickly discredited chief, and passed his last years in indigence, relieved toward the close by the generosity of the Imperial government which he had opposed.

Lamartine's poetry belongs almost wholly to the early period, and is, as he himself says, a direct result of the study of De Staël, to whom he owed more than any other Romanticist. It is usually lyric in form, almost always so in sentiment. It deals with the relations of man to an idealized Nature rather than to his fellow-men. Indeed, Lamartine has but one note, and that not an inspiring one. His verses preserve much of the verbal mannerisms of the former generation; they flow in an ever-broadening and somewhat shallow stream, from the "Meditations" to the diffuse epic

parables of "Jocelyn" and the "Angel's Fall." It is hard for the modern reader to realize, still harder to comprehend, the ardent admiration that hailed each succeeding volume; for, great as is the bulk of his verse, his message was all in his first poems, and gained nothing by repetition. He was a noble-minded but melancholy and somewhat sickly idealist, nursed in the school of Rousseau, who in early life had no crosses to stir his vigor; and when these came in later years, they discovered none to stir. So at his best "he touches but does not penetrate the heart," and at its worst his sentimentality is nauseating. He acknowledges himself "incapable of the exacting labor of the file and of criticism;" so, while his verses flow as naturally as the gentle rain from heaven, their ethereal mushiness drowns the germs of healthy realistic action. True passion never descended to such depths as "My letter is not ink, but written tears," or "These verses fell from my pen like drops of evening dew." Real suffering has a different throb from the rhythmic pulsation of his "Laments," and his smug "Meditations" provoke in our day more exasperation than sympathy.

But in 1820 the French people were weary and heart-sick, and none appealed to them as did Lamartine. He brought home to the heart of cultured France the hazy religiosity of Chateaubriand and the equally hazy Nature-worship of Rousseau; and while there was in the public this mood to comprehend him, Lamartine's popularity was secure. But when this mood yielded to a more energetic spirit, the poet soon sank to the place of a writer whom few read, though all conventionally admire. After the collapse of his political fortunes, he seems to have felt, what others had felt

long before, that his poetic vein was worked out. And his later work suffered from the speed with which he was constrained to produce it. "Graziella" and other short tales are graceful, but weak; the "Voyage en Orient" is too rhetorical, and the "History of the Girondins" is both declamatory and demagogic. Yet Lamartine still merits serious study, less for what he is to any group of readers to-day than for what he was to a former generation, — the most complete reflection of their sentiments and aspirations.

A sturdier man in every way, and in his earlier poetic period more in sympathy with the spirit of Romanticism, was De Vigny,[1] distinguished not only in poetry but also in the drama and in fiction. He was of a military family, and, like Lamartine, connected with the army from 1815 to 1827, — twelve years of piping peace that seem to have disgusted him with the profession. He was already an author of good report, and emancipated from material cares by a wealthy marriage, when he published his first volume of poems, two years after Lamartine's "Meditations." This book is valuable intrinsically, but its importance to the evolution of French poetry lies in three poems, — "La Neige," which is the first grandiose poetic evocation of the middle ages, and "Le Cor," written at Roncesvalles during the Spanish war (1823), which, with "Moïse," is the first attempt in French to treat philosophic subjects in epic and dramatic form.

[1] Born 1799; died 1863. Poetry: Poèmes, 1822; Poèmes antiques et modernes, 1826; Les Destinées, 1864. Prose: Cinq-Mars, 1826; Stello, 1832; Servitude et grandeur militaires, 1835; Journal d'un poète, 1867.

Criticism: Brunetière, Poésie lyrique, ii. 3; Littérature contemporaine, 31; Faguet, xix. siècle, 124; Paléologue, De Vigny (Grands écrivains français); Dorison, De Vigny, poète philosophe, and De Vigny et la poésie politique; Sainte-Beuve, Portraits contemporains, i. 326, and Nouveaux lundis, vi.

The epic "Eloa," that followed in 1824, was more in the tone of Lamartine, and doubtless served as a model for his "Angel's Fall." Here the heroine, a sister of the angels, born of a tear of the Saviour, falls from her native grace by a sympathy so universal as to embrace even the Spirit of Evil. The style of this poem, as of the earlier "Moïse" and "Le Déluge," shows the influence of the young Hugo, but reacted with greater power on that poet's later manner; while "Dolorida," another short narrative in verse, inspired, like "Le Cor," by his Spanish campaign, seems to have left its impress on De Musset's youthful "Contes d'Espagne et d'Italie."

The Revolution of 1830 produced essential changes in De Vigny's genius; and his small posthumous volume, "Les Destinées," reveals him at the height of his power as a lyric pessimist and philosophic poet who felt his function to be "to represent thoughts, epic, philosophic, dramatic." So, in a sense, he became a "Symbolist," from whom the school of that name have learned much and might learn more. Especially in "Le Mont des oliviers" and "La Maison du berger," there is a purposeful objectivity, a grappling with the problems of life, as they present themselves, old foes with new faces, to our century, more vigorous than would have been looked for in the author of "Eloa." But the general note of these "Philosophic Poems" is gloomy skepticism, with desperate exhortations to self-reliance, since there is nothing else on which to rely.

At first his changed mood found expression in the drama and in fiction, that will claim our attention presently. After 1835 he published nothing, wrapping his pessimism in a stern silence, taking for himself

the rule of "Stello" to separate the poetic from the political life, since "the application of ideas to things is but time lost for the creation of thoughts."

This self-contained calm contrasts strangely with the eager utterance of the inner circle of the Romanticists. With him, as with his Chatterton, "continual revery killed action."[1] He has been said thus to occupy a middle ground between De Musset and Chénier; but his thoughtfulness, somewhat chilling at times, suggests rather Madame de Staël, and artistically he has much in common with Chateaubriand, though he is more coldly impersonal and probably much more sincere in his pessimism, — if indeed the morbid sentiment of "René" should be dignified with the name of pessimism at all.

If we may trust De Vigny's "Journal" and his posthumous poems, Nature seemed to him "a tomb," where it was the part of wisdom "to respond with a cold silence to the eternal silence of God."[2] "Peaceful despair is true wisdom," he says elsewhere. "Good is always mixed with evil; evil alone is pure and unmixed." "Extreme good is ill, extreme ill never good;" while "hope is the source of all cowardice." So broods this self-tormentor, who "loves the majesty of human sufferings," — a verse that he declares to be "the sense of all his philosophic poems." To him the real is less real than the symbol, the seen than the unseen. "The dream is as dear to the thinker as all that he loves in the actual world, and more terrible than all

[1] Curiously enough, unhappy love, the very cause of the fecundity of Lamartine and De Musset, was the reason of his silence. See Paléologue, pp. 89–105.

[2] Le juste opposera le dédain à l'absence,
Et ne répondra plus que par un froid silence
Au silence éternel de la divinité.

that he fears." His very genius seems to him a fatal gift; glory only "immortalizes misfortune." His Joshua is "pensive and pale," because he is God's elect; his Moses, "mighty and solitary." If at times, under the cruel deceptions of love, he seemed to lose faith in his idealism, his pessimism remained always noble, restrained, sympathetic, manifesting itself not in appeals for condolence but in pitying care of all who were near and dear to him. But this lofty poetry, interpenetrated with the stern despair of pessimistic idealism, will always be unintelligible to the many. As a poet, De Vigny appeals to the chosen few alone. In his dramas his genius is more emancipated from himself; in his novels, most of all. It is by these that he is most widely known, and by these that he exercised the greatest influence on the literary life of his generation. But his philosophic poems will be his monument, *ære perennius*, when all else shall be forgotten.

Lamartine and the young De Vigny stand on the threshold of Romanticism. With De Musset we are in its full efflorescence. No poet ever announced his advent with more of the genial sense of youth than he. "He makes his entry with a bright song on his lips, spring on his cheeks, his eye candid and proud, smiling at existence, the elect of genius and affianced to love." [1] His is the poetry of Nature, — that gushing of simple passion that mocks all rule and "sings of summer in full-throated ease," or quivers with the pain of his heart's reopening wounds. But to this rich blossoming of his spring-time there came an early autumn and a long winter. At thirty De Musset was already an old man seeking in artificial stimuli the fountain

[1] Pellissier, Mouvement littéraire au xix. siècle.

of a youth that would not spring again. The zeal of his house had eaten him up; his passion had burned itself out and burned out his heart with it. He had done his work; it mattered little to literature or to him whether the curtain had fallen on his life's drama in 1841 or in 1857.

A Parisian, born in 1810,[1] of noble and cultured family, he was a most precocious and excitable child and a wayward youth. He printed his first volume in 1829, and his last of note in 1841. During this brief interval he produced many lyrics of the highest value, dramatic work of quite peculiar charm, and stories worthy to rank with the best of that brilliant decade. More than any of his fellows, he was a poet by inspiration, not by art. He sang "because he must;" he was a law to himself. His sportive genius even went out of its way to ridicule or to offend "the rhyming school that cares only for form." It would seek, or at least it would not shun, irregularities, solecisms, and venturesome similes, of which the famous comparison of the moon to the dot on an *i* is only an easily quotable example.

In this, as in much else, "De Musset was a child

[1] Died 1857. Chronology of the principal works — Poetry: Contes d'Espagne et d'Italie, 1830; Rolla, 1833; Les Nuits, 1835–1837. Dramas: Caprices de Marianne, 1833; Lorenzaccio, Fantasio, On ne badine pas avec l'amour, 1834; Le Chandelier, 1835; Il ne faut jurer de rien, 1836. Fiction: Confession d'un jeune homme du siècle. 1836; Contes, 1837–1844; La Mouche, 1853. The sixteen years, 1841–1857, show two or three lyrics of the first rank, several good dramas and stories, but nothing that marks growth.

Criticism: Brunetière, Poésie lyrique, i. 257, and Époques du théâtre français, 349; Faguet, xix. siècle, 259; Barine, De Musset (Grands écrivains français); Paul Lindau, Alfred de Musset (Berlin, 1876); Palgrave, Oxford Essays; Sainte-Beuve, Portraits contemporains, i. 397.

all his life, and a spoiled child." Extreme in all things, he would work excessively, only to yield more completely to utter idleness and his lower nature. Like Rousseau, and all who have nursed themselves in hypersensitiveness, he suffered acutely from self-deception and disillusionment. So, in the spirit of Romantic devotion, he accompanied George Sand to Italy (1834), only to be tortured by an estrangement (1835) that lay in the nature of things and cost her few pangs, while it marks the cardinal point in his career.[1] Here lay his power, but also his weakness. "Strike the heart," he said; "genius lies there." To bare his heart, to display his emotions, is with him instinct rather than design. Hence his power of invention is not strong. He was no thinker, like De Vigny; but he painted wonderfully what he had felt subjectively, and what he felt supremely was the hollow worthlessness of the only love he knew. Love and passion were the Alpha and Omega of his life. In his "Confession" he says: "I did not conceive that one could do anything but love." If, now, such a nature is possessed by egoistical skepticism, genius will not save the man, though it may the work. Faust's "eternal womanly" has no power to draw such souls upward and on. It drew De Musset, as it has others whom we shall meet, to intellectual and moral decay, of which the successive steps can be traced in his dramas and his lyrics.

His first work, "Les Contes d'Espagne et d'Italie," shows reckless daring in the choice of brutal subjects of crime and debauchery, quite in the spirit of Le Sage,

[1] She made it the subject of a novel, "Elle et lui," which provoked "Lui et elle," an indignant reply, from De Musset's brother Paul. The matter is fully and impartially treated by Barine, pp. 57–90.

with much freshness and *brio*, and a dash of dandified impertinence in verses that mocked the foibles of the older Romanticists, and suggested to his contemporaries the Byron of "Don Juan." But he repelled the flattering comparison. "My glass is not large, but I drink from my own," he said. However, he presently abandoned this style for the more subjective strain of "Les Vœux stériles" and "Raphael," and for the declamation of "Namouna" and "Rolla," both very eloquent at times, though fundamentally immature. Already he is playing with the passionate fire that, after the separation from George Sand, will fill his heart with the throbbing passion of "Les Nuits," which, with the "Ode to Malibran" and the "Letter to Lamartine" (1836), mark the highest point of his lyric development, — a time of sad but in the main sober resignation, that had overcome the spirit of revolt, and had not yet yielded to the lethargy of debauchery.

Even his second volume had shown the overflowing confidence of youth a little checked by experience. In "Rolla," one of the strongest and most depressing of all his poems, the skeptic regrets the faith he has lost the power to regain, and realizes in lucid flashes the desolate emptiness of his own heart. And the same note that has here a brazen ring sounds with more subdued sadness in the four "Nuits" and in "Espoir en Dieu."[1] For De Musset had not the courage to follow his aspirations. Seeds of disease, fostered by a wild and reckless life, sapped his will even while his genius still shone bright. But if his lyric production grows more sparing and in form less Romantic, occasional outbursts, such as "Le Rhin allemand," show that at times he could still gather

[1] "Rolla" is dated 1833; the "Nuits," 1833 to 1837; "Espoir," 1838.

up all his powers. Yet, in the next years, both the lyric and the drama were laid aside for prose fiction, to which we shall recur presently. He resumed the drama, in 1845, with the charming "Il faut qu'une porte soit ouverte ou fermée;" but the comedies that followed were far below his earlier standard. His lyric work had now almost wholly ceased, and one is more than once tempted to wish it had ceased altogether.[1]

It was of the nature of Romanticism to encourage the most varied individualization. It might be hard to find in literature a more radical divergence than that of De Musset and Gautier; for just as one was, in Leconte de Lisle's contemptuous phrase, the "showman" of his heart's emotion, so the other was a conscious artist, objective in æsthetics as in morals, judging his work from the intellectual side, enjoying his art for its own sake. It is more true of Gautier than of any considerable French poet, that he seems to write for the sake of writing, for the joy that he finds in the art of manipulating the language.

Born in Provence, Gautier[2] was educated at Paris,

[1] The chronology of the "Contes" is: Emmeline, 1837; Deux maîtresses, Frédéric et Bernadette, Fils du Titien, Margot, 1838; Croisilles (his best), 1839; Merle blanc, 1842; Mimi Pinson, 1843; Pierre et Camille, 1844; La Mouche, 1853.

[2] Born 1811; died 1872. Poetry: Poésies, 1830; Albertus, 1832; Comédie de la mort, 1838; Émaux et camées, 1853. Fiction: Les Jeunes France, 1833; Mademoiselle de Maupin, 1835; Fortunio, 1838; Roman de la momie, 1856; Capitaine Fracasse, 1861–1863; Spirite, 1866. Travel: Tra los montes, 1843; Zigzags, 1845; Italia, 1852; Constantinople, 1854; Loin de Paris, 1864; Quand on voyage, 1865; Russie, 1866; L'Orient, 1876. Criticism: Les Grotesques, 1844; Histoire du romantisme (written in and after 1830).

See Du Camp, Théophile Gautier; Baudelaire, Œuvres, iii. 151; Brunetière, Poésie lyrique, ii. 41, and the literature there cited.

and at first gave himself to painting, cultivating a literary taste by much reading, especially in the rich literature of the sixteenth century, in Marot and the Pleiad,—a training to which Sainte-Beuve attributed the sureness of his metrical touch. He was led by these studies to write critical essays that attracted some attention; but his literary advent dates from 1830, when his first volume appeared in the midst of a political revolution. Although his verses won him the praise of Hugo, and admission to the Cénacle, yet his work remained chiefly critical. He made himself the centre of a school of ultra Romanticists, the *flamboyants*, as they were wont to call themselves, who with long hair and flaring waistcoats delighted to provoke the impotent rage of the *grisâtres* and *perruques*, the greybeards and periwigs, as they called the belated adherents of Classicism. Under his leadership this band of artists, musicians, and struggling writers fought the battles of emancipation in more than one Parisian theatre with an enthusiasm of which he has left a delightfully humorous account in his so-called "Histoire du Romantisme."

Presently this battle ceased for lack of combatants; and the irony of fate made Gautier for a time secretary to the novelist Balzac, a post that must have been inconceivably uncongenial to one of his tastes and temperament. He soon abandoned it, but the discipline was not without influence on his future novels. Then, as soon as better fortune permitted, Gautier travelled gladly and widely. He visited Spain, Algeria, Italy, Constantinople, and Russia, and made from his experiences books that are classics in the picturesque literature of the world. Meantime a few dramatic attempts had only reminded him of the

limitations of his genius. His novels and tales are more interesting, and perhaps most read; but it is his poetry that gives him his prominent place in the literary evolution of the century.

In all his work one is impressed first and most by his extraordinary love of beauty and by his wonderful power of language. Then one notes that he is radically differentiated from the Romantic and possibly from the true lyric spirit by the objective soullessness of his poetry, by what Brunetière calls "its lack of personal sensation or conception." And finally, as one reviews his work, one finds him shrinking everywhere from the ugly, especially as symbolized in death, and yet ever morbidly recurring to it in the midst of the joys of sense,—a thing not uncommon with our modern literary hedonists. It is just here that these men miss the classical note. In vain they emulate the careless joy of Theocritus or Anacreon. They cannot efface their Christian birthmark; they cannot be or act as though it were not. They may close, as Gautier did during the Revolution of 1848, their shutters to the world and its sympathies, until they see in a Belgian landscape only "an awkward imitation of Ruysdael," until form alone comes to have meaning and value, and the poet does not punctuate his manuscripts, that nothing may disturb the worship of his fetish words; yet a vein of iconoclastic bitterness always mars the statuesque repose. In the struggle against environment the cultus of art for art is apt to become one of art for artificiality, a snare that even Hugo did not wholly avoid. Gautier came to attach signification not only to the meaning and sound of words, but to their very vowels and consonants, though he never descended to the freaks of the modern Symbolists. As he said

himself of one of his characters, "he lived so much in books and painting that he ended by finding Nature herself no longer true;" and while he was dividing this cummin-seed, the intrinsic interest of his subject and even its moral bearings became indifferent to him. Formal beauty was all in all.

From the first, the precision of his verse attracted the keen ear of Sainte-Beuve. "There is a man who carves in granite," he said of the "Tête de mort" in 1829. Gautier's first long poem, "Albertus," may resist and hardly repay analysis; but as a series of weird, vivid, fantastic pictures, the orgy at Beelzebub's court and the gallows-humor of the close are quite worthy of that sixteenth century from which he drew his inspiration. This was a freak of strong but morbid imagination, and the "Comédie de la mort," suggested perhaps by the "Ahasvérus" of Edgar Quinet, shows preoccupation with the same gloomy subject. In this poem of uncanny fascination, life in death and death in life are exhibited in a series of brief but impressive pictures. The worm talks to the bride who died on her wedding-day, and prints the first kiss on her lips; the skull of Raphael tells the poet of the fair Fornarina; Faust has discovered that living is loving, and Don Juan that virtue is the solution of the world's mystery; Napoleon regrets that he did not rather "sport with Amaryllis in the shade" than conquer the continent. One and all speak of lost illusions, but nowhere in this poem of death is there a hint of life beyond the grave.

Gautier had, however, another string to his lyre. His "Paysages et intérieurs" are charming pictures of the cheerful side of life and of natural beauty. But he regards nature more in its exterior aspect and

less in its relations to man than Lamartine or Rousseau would have done. And this is true also of the "Émaux et camées," poems as delicate and as cold as their title suggests. Not even the toys of a dead child will persuade the poet to do more than paint with an infinitely delicate brush a picture that may work its own way to the heart.

Never was poet so wrapped up in his art, so bent on catching the outward form, so indifferent to the spiritual meaning of things; and his most zealous disciples have been most eager to imitate his limitations. And yet, in the vagaries of the new individualism, it was well for the future of French poetry that these masterpieces of elaborate correctness should be set for an example before others who had that love of humanity without which the best poetry is but a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. That touch of Nature was best represented among the Romanticists by the righteous indignation of Barbier's "Iambes," —satires on the ignoble side, social and political, of the generation that came to the front with Louis Philippe. Romanticism, being in its essence lyric, naturally revived satire; and the "Iambes" awaited their equal till Hugo's "Châtiments" enlarged the borders and deepened the bitterness of poetic wrath.

But though lyric poetry was the natural stronghold of Romanticism, general agreement made the drama the battle-ground between the conservatives and the reformers. All the members of the Cénacle, whatever the bent of their talent, joined in this attempt to carry the war into the heart of the enemy's country. Here Classicism was most strongly intrenched; here the old rules had been most strictly enforced; here

the effect of the new liberties could be most plainly seen; here the public could pronounce an immediate and unmistakable verdict; here alone, at least in France, could literary propagandism be effectually prosecuted.

The classic stage certainly invited, almost cried for, reforms that the innovators of the eighteenth century had not been able to secure. In 1820 De Rémusat remarks the disgust of audiences for dramas in classic form. It seemed to him "as though all means of causing emotion had lost their effect. People recognized them and were weary of them." Some dramatists had already attempted, and some critics, among them Lemercier and Stendhal, had preached a return to natural methods, and preferred Shakspere to Racine. There was indeed little absolutely new in the dramatic theories elaborated by the critics of the "Globe," and proclaimed in Hugo's preface to "Cromwell" with an eloquent daring that found an echo in De Vigny's introduction to his translation of "Othello" (1829). But they were the first to make effective the demand for a deeper and fuller study of character, for individuals in place of types; they first announced their readiness to exchange the classical indefiniteness of time and place, that befitted the enunciation of universal truths, for dramatic illusion in elaborate reproductions of local and temporal conditions. But for this the historical drama offered the best excuse and opportunity. Their aim was to specialize and diversify what the Classicists had generalized. To do this, they were obliged to extend the time of the dramatic action beyond the single day that might suffice for the already formed characters of Racine. The "unity of place" was even more easily abandoned, and "unity of action" yielded

to unity of interest.[1] No one has stated this better than De Vigny. The new drama, he thinks, should deal with long periods of time, entire lives. The characters are to be introduced with only the germs of the passions from which the tragedy is to grow, and destiny is to be shown gradually enveloping its victims. All is to be as in life. There are to be no messengers, as with the Greeks and Racine. Action is to take the place of talk about action. The Romantic aspiration is to present "a whirl of events;" Hugo desires "a crowd in the drama."

In their zeal for "local color," the Romanticists had had predecessors as radical as they; but they were led by it to a further step of great importance. The tragic dialogue of the Classicists is all pitched on one key. The slave, if he does not actually use the language of the emperor, must at least be dignified. Even in comedy Boileau reproaches Molière with travestying his characters. But now each person was to talk in the language of his station, at least so far as the still obligatory alexandrine admitted, though lyric measures were allowed for passion and distress, and royalty might at times appear, as Lemercier puts it, "en déshabillé." The public could have asked more, but it seems to have welcomed this instalment of liberty.

The Romanticists made no pretence of desiring dramatic realism. To their minds "an impassable barrier separated reality according to art from reality according to Nature" (De Vigny). On the stage all effects were to be heightened, magnified. The noble should be sublime, the ugly grotesque. They knew

[1] For the predecessors of the Romanticists in these liberties, see Brunetière, Époques du théâtre français, p. 319.

that such exaggeration tended back to the Classical types, but they hoped to maintain a middle ground of idealized reality. So while the Romantic movement proclaimed a radical revolution, it ended in a moderate reform. Indeed, in some of its phases, especially in the essentially lyric intrusion of the personality of the author, it was less realistic than the Classical drama itself.

In this field Hugo is greatest, Dumas most popular. This latter, who was also the most fertile and widely read of the Romantic novelists, united the blood of an innkeeper's daughter and of a general, himself the son of a marquis and of a creole. He sustained the traditions of his family by marrying an actress, though his well-known son was an illegitimate child. The family of young Dumas were poor, and he was sent in 1823 to seek his fortune in Paris, where indeed he speedily found it; for in six years he achieved a dramatic success that made him one of the most popular writers of his generation. He had begun with stage trifles, but was roused to more serious efforts by the visit of the English actors in 1827. He then wrote "Christine," one of his very few dramas in verse, which he alleges would have been acted at the national Théâtre Français in 1828, had it not been for a cabal. As it was, his "Henri III.," in vigorous prose, produced in February, 1829, was the first successful drama on the new lines; and though the author lacked the prestige of De Vigny to win critical recognition for his theories, he did what De Vigny had failed to do, — he carried his audience by storm, and gained a financial success till then unrivalled in the history of the stage.

"Henri III." had certainly the vigor of overflowing

genius, a contagious love of life and action, a boundless fertility of invention, that were thoroughly characteristic of the author. It mattered little to the public that his historical studies were of a very "impressionist" nature, and, as he said himself, "a mere nail to hang his pictures on." To them it mattered little, either, that critics found fault with his psychology or with his notions of mine and thine. The crowd was pleased, and paid its money cheerfully. Yet "Henri III." has less literary value than any drama of Hugo, less than De Vigny's "Chatterton," or several of De Musset's comedies; but it educated a public which, because it had been educated, ceased to care for it.

The Revolution of July followed, and Dumas' first drama after it is the malodorous "Antony," where the historic thread is dropped for a romance of modern life, that Dumas may graft on the tree of literature the vigorous shoot of illicit sexual relations that has borne such varied dead-sea fruit in succeeding generations. "Antony" is an apology for adultery and a defence of suicide. Its success was more one of sensation than of esteem, and the author returned to the historical drama, to attain in "Le Tour de Nesle" (1832) the *ne plus ultra* of sentimentalism and his greatest popular triumph, though hardly one of which he had cause to be proud, since some of its most telling effects had been borrowed without acknowledgment. He followed this with a considerable number of sensational dramas,[1] but was gradually diverted to the more profitable field of prose fiction, though his inexhaustible fecundity never quite abandoned the stage. But he could not

[1] The best are Kean, 1836; Paul Jones, 1838; Mademoiselle de Belle-Isle, 1839; Un Mariage sous Louis XV., 1841; Les Demoiselles de Saint-Cyr, 1843.

equal his early efforts in this *genre*, which, though far from great, were most useful in popularizing Romantic ideas among those whose pecuniary aid was a condition of material success.

De Vigny's "More de Venise," which dates from the same year as "Henri III.," was the most faithful translation of the great English dramatist that France had yet seen; and so it served as a powerful plea for masculine vigor and directness of speech, as opposed to the weak conventionalism of Soumet and Delavigne. A veritable tempest raged over Desdemona's "handkerchief." So vulgar a word shocked the conservatives, who would have had it called a "tissue," and protested loudly against this defilement of the poetic vocabulary, as they did also against some metrical liberties with the alexandrine muse, that seemed little less than sacrilege to the disciples of Boileau.

In "Othello" De Vigny had violated too many prejudices to win great success; and his little comedy that followed, "Quitte pour la peur," hardly deserved any. Nor can his "Maréchale d'Ancre" claim notice, except as the introduction to his study of the age of Louis XIII. that was soon to produce "Cinq-Mars." The dramatic strength of De Vigny centres in "Chatterton" (1835), a plea for poetic idealism that commands admiration though it is too pessimistic to be enjoyed as a work of dramatic art. The play was drawn from his own "Stello," and was in prose, till then rarely used in tragedy; but in the mouth of the English boy-poet De Vigny has placed speeches that lack nothing but the form of pure poetry. To the Lord-Mayor who cavils at the uselessness of the poet in the ship of state, Chatterton replies with a noble flash, "The finger of the Lord points the course; he reads

it in the stars."[1] So far, however, as Chatterton could read the celestial signs in his own case, they pointed to suicide, by which his pride thought to avenge itself on society for its disdain. Perhaps this very morbid pride was what attracted De Vigny to the subject. But his treatment of it is very powerful, and keeps the play alive to-day, though, as Sainte-Beuve remarked, "it touched the nerves rather than the heart." In those days nerves were certainly more delicate than now. We read that at its climax "there was a cry of horror, of pity and enthusiasm. The audience rose and remained standing for ten minutes; the men clapping, the women waving their handkerchiefs." But De Vigny probably perceived the limitations of dramatic Romanticism too clearly to seek to follow up his tragic success.

De Musset was of equal and higher dramatic originality.[2] It is unfortunate that his first play, "Les Nuits venétiennes," should have fallen before a well-organized opposition exasperated by the recent success of Hugo's "Hernani;" for by this he was diverted from the stage, though he had more genuine dramatic talent than any other member of the school. This first essay showed his complete accord with the fundamental Romantic conception that tragedy must mingle with comedy on the stage as in life; but with him mingling was not juxtaposition but interpenetration, and he had too delicate a taste to yield to the extravagances of Dumas and the lesser Romanticists. Nursing his genius on the study of Shakspere, and writing for the publisher rather than the stage, his work shows con-

[1] Act III. scene 6.

[2] See especially Lemaître's preface to Jouast's edition of De Musset's Théâtre, and also Brunetière, Époques du théâtre français, 357.

stant progress from the "Storm and Stress" of "À quoi rêve les jeunes filles" and "La Coupe et les lèvres" to "Fantasio," "Lorenzaccio," and "Les Caprices de Marianne," the only one of these comedies that is still frequently acted. Here, as in his essay "De la tragédie" (1838), he refuses absolute allegiance to the Romantic or Classical principles, and seeks by a judicious eclecticism to combine the outward appearance of restraint with the new liberty to associate the weird and terrible in human life with its higher comic aspects, as had been done by Shakspere.

De Musset, perhaps more than any other contemporary dramatist, certainly more than any of his French predecessors, understood the presentation of complex characters, especially of such as illustrated the contradictions of his own nature. To this power he added a ready wit, and made his plays sparkle with dialogue unequalled since Beaumarchais. But, though nearly all this work was done between 1833 and 1835, it had no immediate effect on the development of dramatic art, for none of these plays were acted till 1848, and they did not establish a definite place on the stage till the later years of the Second Empire. From about 1865 their influence can be traced as a corrective to the excessive naturalism of the school of Balzac, — a vindication of the rights of fancy to roam with the airy, tripping grace and elegance that make the charm of the Italian Renaissance, of the sonnets of Petrarch, the comedies of Marivaux, and the undiscovered country of Watteau's shepherds. In this De Musset showed more real originality and a truer dramatic genius than De Vigny or Hugo. Two or three of his comedies contain the quintessence of Romantic imaginative art, and will probably hold the stage longer than any

dramatic work of this school; for they show most and best the unchecked freedom of fancy which joined with the spirit of realistic comedy to produce the modern French drama.[1]

In prose fiction, as in the drama and in poetry, the distinctive characteristic of Romantic work is its subjectivity and its unbridled imagination, both of which show themselves in the historians and critics of the movement, but are naturally most marked in the novelists, who from this time become more and more the dominant element in French literary life. All the Romanticists of whom we have spoken — Hugo, Gautier, De Vigny, Dumas — are more widely known and more generally prized to-day for their prose fiction than for their verses; though, except in Dumas' case, these are of far higher literary value.

In "Cinq-Mars" De Vigny gave French literature its best historical novel, which he based on a most minute study of more than three hundred volumes, while he vivified all with a flight of fancy and sweep of narration that he never equalled. In his conception of the romance he owed much to Walter Scott; and he might have profited still more from him, for while "Cinq-Mars" is an excellent piece of picturesque imagination, it is exceedingly poor history. It is vivid, dramatic, delicate in details, firm in delineation, or perhaps one should say distortion, of character. For neither Richelieu, nor his secretary Joseph, nor De Thou, nor King Louis, is true to history; and they are hardly more true to human nature. They seem rather changing masks than mobile faces; types, personifications, rather than men. But, with all its faults, "Cinq-Mars"

[1] Cp. Brunetière, Époques du théâtre français, p. 348.

remains a very brilliant study of a critical period in the social and political life of France.

De Vigny wrote also little biographical tales of Gilbert, Chatterton, and Chénier, — three poets "snatched away in beauty's bloom," — and a group of military stories, "Servitude et grandeur militaires," of great nobility and pathos. Here he spoke of a career that he knew both by experience and family tradition. The self-abnegating heroism of the soldier had a peculiar charm for his stern temperament; and he dwelt with affection on the glory and pathos of military life at a time when almost every Frenchman had shared the thrills of the victories and the gloom of the defeat of their great emperor. "Here," says a kindred spirit, John Stuart Mill, "the poem of human life is open before us, and M. de Vigny does but chant from it in a voice of subdued sadness . . . the sentiment of duty to its extremest consequences." There is remarkable artistic restraint in "Le Cachet rouge," a bit of psychology from the Reign of Terror; and the chapter in "La Canne de jonc" that describes the meeting of Pope and Emperor is the stylistic gem of a book that will rank very high among the rhetorical masterpieces of France.

De Musset's prose occupies more space than his lyrics or his dramas; but it has far less value, and owes its chief significance to the clearness with which it exhibits the progress of his ethical disintegration. In "Emmeline" we have a rather dangerous juggling with the psychology of love. Then follows a study of simultaneous love, "Les Deux maîtresses," quite in the spirit of Jean Paul. Three sympathetic excursions into Parisian Bohemia follow,[1] and then "Le

[1] Frédéric et Bernadette, Mimi Pinson, Le Secret de Javotte.

de Titien" and "Croisilles," carefully elaborated rical novelettes; the latter overflowing still with antic spirits, and contrasting strangely with "La iche," one of the last flickerings of his imagination. Margot" bears marks of George Sand, and "Le Merle blanc" is a sort of allegory of their rupture, based on the Ugly Duckling of the nursery. Finally, "Pierre et Camille" is a pretty but slight tale of deaf-mute love.

More ambitious but less interesting is De Musset's "Confession," the immediate result of his unhappy Italian experience. It shows even in 1836 whither the shrinking from all moral compulsion and self-control was leading him. He sees his ethical weakness, but attributes it, perversely enough, to the spirit of an age made sick by Napoleon, whose fall had "left a ruined world for a generation weighted by care," who "struggled to fill their lungs with the air he had breathed." "During the Empire, while husbands and brothers were in Germany, anxious mothers brought into the world an ardent, pale, nervous generation." Thus De Musset would account for his own lack of will; but surely it was rather the spacious times of the Empire that left the impulse of their energy on the literary men of a generation of which Hugo is more typical than De Musset. His talent appears to more advantage in later critical essays, especially the witty letters of Dupuis and Cotonet, that satirize modern marriage, the journalists, the novelists, and especially the critics of thoroughbred Romanticism. Indeed, he does not fail to send a few Parthian shafts even at the high-priest of the movement, — at Hugo himself.

As in poetry, so here, the sharpest contrast to De

Musset is Gautier, to whom in fiction as in verse form is the paramount interest, while psychology is subordinated or suppressed. In the whole range of his work there is not one clearly drawn character; and were it not for the dreary, muddled efforts of Mademoiselle de Maupin's Albert to explain himself, one might say there was no attempt at one. This was in some degree true of De Musset; but Gautier's tales lacked the invention, feeling, and emotional intensity of the other's work, good or bad. It has been said that his novels start from nothing, and end where they began. He enters the field with "Les Jeunes France," stories mildly satirizing the vagaries of his own school, freaks of luxuriant fancy in which we miss a single touch of nature. Nor shall we find it in the frankly hedonistic "Mademoiselle de Maupin," [1] exquisite in style, but so ostentatious in its disregard of moral conventions as to close the Academy forever to one who would surely else have won a distinguished place among those "Immortals." More in the playful satyr vein of "Les Jeunes France" is "Fortunio," which he calls "a hymn to beauty, wealth, and happiness, the sole trinity that we recognize." But the hymn is not inspiring. His Fortunio is so cold, so selfish, that the reader cannot sympathize with the gentle Musidora's devotion, still less with her despairing suicide. There is a taste of dead-sea fruit in Gautier's feast. "Vanity of vanities" is the real, though unexpressed, moral of this book.

And yet in 1863 Gautier writes: "'Fortunio' is the

[1] Du Camp (Gautier, p. 140) says that Mademoiselle or rather Madame de Maupin was an historical character, who sang at the Paris Opéra, went through a large part of Europe in male attire as an adventuress, and died in 1707 in a convent at the age of 44.

last work in which I have freely expressed my true thought. From that point the invasion of cant and the necessity of subjecting myself to the conventions of journalism have thrown me into purely physical description." For the next twenty-five years the great bulk of his work was in artistic, dramatic, and literary criticism, uncongenial but remunerative. He had begun such work some years before with critical essays on the "Grotesques" of the sixteenth century, whom he had treated with genius, insight, exaggeration, and inaccuracy. He had also written contemporary criticisms of Hugo and others who "answered to Hernani's horn." But in 1836 he became a staff-critic of "La Presse," and later of the official "Moniteur" and "Journal;" and to these he contributed some two thousand articles,[1] wasting precious genius on work that was inevitably ephemeral. But from this constant drudgery he snatched time to compose and polish the most perfect of his poems, and to write short stories where fancy could supply his lack of sustained imagination. Among these the best are "Avatar," a weird tale of the transmigration of souls; "Jettatura," a tragedy of the evil eye; and "Arria Marcella," a phantasmagoria of revived Pompeii. The phantom love that inspired "Albertus" reappears in "Omphale," in "The Mummy's Foot," "The Opium Pipe," "La Toison d'or," and, above all, in "La Morte amoureuse," which in form is one of the most perfect tales in the language. He attempted

[1] See their titles in Spoelberch de Louvenjoul, Histoire des œuvres de T. Gautier, 1887. Of this journalistic work Gautier himself says regretfully, —

> O poètes divins! je ne suis plus des vôtres,
> On m'a fait une niche, où je veille, tapi
> Dans le bas d'un journal, comme un dogue accroupi.

archaeological fiction also in "Le Roman da la momie," but for this he had hardly an adequate equipment.

More congenial to his genius, and surely his most charming prose work, is "Le Capitaine Fracasse," which he justly calls "a bill drawn in my youth and redeemed in middle life," for it shows all his youthful *verve* mastered by the mature artist. We are transported to the fascinating times of Louis XIII., to ruined castles and bands of strolling actors, for which Scarron's "Roman comique" may have served as prototype, and to the Paris of the Renaissance, which furnishes the book's most brilliant chapters. Finally, in his last novel, "Spirite," Gautier returned once more to phantom love, and by a skilful appeal to the skeptical credulity of the time, won a success more rapid, more widespread, but less lasting and less deserved, than attended "Fracasse" or "Fortunio."

In his fiction as in his verse Gautier will satisfy in no subject that calls for human sympathy or insight into character; but wherever an exquisite power of vision upborne by a vocabulary of boundless resource and unrivalled delicacy of shading will suffice, wherever the plastic alone is demanded, wherever the author may be artist, he is almost without a rival. And it should be noted that this limitation in creative power was helpful to him in criticism, where he could apply his delicate sense of the beautiful to fix and define the merits of others, to explain and reconvey their charm; hence, too, his descriptions of travel are among the most marvellous word-pictures in any language, and would be among the masterpieces of literature if *ut pictura poesis* were not a false canon of criticism.

Nearly allied to Gautier in early friendship, in literary labors, in his virtues and his short-comings, was

Gérard de Nerval,[1] whose translation of Faust the aged Goethe loved to read. In delicate elaboration his short tales rival all but the best of Gautier. "Les Femmes du Caire," a brilliant description of Egyptian life from "Scènes de la vie orientale" (1848–1850), is still popular. Equally deserving and more curious are the "Contes et facéties" (1856) and "La Bohème galante" (1856), whose vivid but disordered imagination suggests a mind not wholly sound. Indeed, after his return from a journey to the East, he suffered from several attacks of insanity, and died at last by his own hand.

If we review the whole production of the Romanticists from 1830 to 1840, there will appear a marked tendency to turn from the lyric to the drama and from the drama to fiction. This is seen in Hugo, in De Vigny, in De Musset, and in Gautier, but most of all in that frank vender of his pen, Alexandre Dumas. In 1830 this *enfant terrible* had suddenly abandoned the drama for a frolicsome run in the political field, and seems to have thoroughly enjoyed the bustling days of the July Revolution, of which he tells the most incredible adventures, — how, like a true ancestor of Daudet's Tartarin, he made a desperate march on Soissons, and captured with unaided but resistless courage — a powder-magazine! And some grain of truth must underlie the tale; for when the tempest calmed, he had in some way earned the distrust and forfeited the favor of Louis Philippe. This might have led him to look to a literary field less under the control of the political police; but his work continued wholly dramatic till

[1] Born 1808; died 1855. Cp. Eckermann's Conversations with Goethe, Jan. 3, 1830. Berlioz used Nerval's translation for his "Damnation of Faust."

the reckless plagiarism of "Le Tour de Nesle" involved him in a duel, and made a Swiss tour expedient, during which he kept pen and scissors busy with "Mémoires de voyage," — exceedingly diffuse, but enlivened with such a flow of spirits as to be still good reading for an idle hour.

Then, beginning with "Isabelle de Bavière" (1835), he poured out in ten years more than a hundred volumes of romance; but his great fame dated from "Monte Cristo" (1841–1845), a story perhaps more universally known than any other in modern fiction. Remarkable in any case, it becomes astonishing when it is considered that it was published as it was written from day to day in a newspaper, so that Dumas had no opportunity for revision or elaboration. This device, popular on the Continent, for securing two prices for one book, did not originate with Dumas. Sue had already adopted it for his sensational and anti-Jesuitical tale, "Le Juif errant;" but the success of "Monte Cristo" made it a journalistic habit, so that no French daily is now complete without its half-dozen pages of fiction "below the line." This has been a financial gain to authors, and has increased the number of readers, but it has been of doubtful aid to literature. All men have not the ready invention of Dumas. Writing with the "copy-boy" at their elbow has injured the work of many, even perhaps of the very greatest, of modern French novelists. Yet in the case of "Monte Cristo" it is difficult to see how time or elaboration could have added to its unfailing *verve*, its inexhaustible fertility of resource, the *vraisemblance* that never abandons even its wildest freaks of fancy, and the tension of its interest, which is ever rousing an expectation that it never disappoints. A

half-century still waits for its equal as a romance of plot and incident.

"Monte Cristo" was followed, or rather accompanied, by the hardly less excellent "Three Guardsmen," perhaps in its construction the still unrivalled model of the romance of adventure. After such successes Dumas claimed the rights of a favorite, and became for some years a sort of chartered libertine of the press, certain that whatever he wrote or was supposed to write would bring him readers and large returns. He poured out volumes with astonishing speed, and his income from copyright during this heyday of his fame was not less than 200,000 francs a year. But he spent this and more in semi-barbarous luxury, and, that production might not slacken, he supplemented his own pen by a system of organized collaboration that is probably unique in literary history. In 1844, in the flush of his success, he had made contracts to furnish within a year more than the most skilled penman could possibly have written. Hence he was forced to the questionable resort of "inspiring" two secretaries, from whom there was developed a novel-bureau, where Dumas furnished little but the plot and the titlepage. Not content even with this, he ventured to offer to the public the most impudent compilations and plagiarisms. Thus he was able to produce fifty or sixty volumes a year, and some twelve hundred in all, while, in regard to the greater part of them, there is no certainty that he had so much as read their contents. But though, even as early as 1847, these methods were unsparingly exposed, yet his touch, whenever he did put his hand to the work, was so admirable that wherever it was felt the fame and life of the book were secure.

The years that preceded the Second Republic mark the summit of his genius. They count "La Reine Margot," "Vingt ans après," and "Le Vicomte de Bragelonne," all tales of seventeenth-century life with which his dramatic studies had given him superficial familiarity. But presently this popularity turned his head, and filled him with a notion of his importance, — a megalomania that would be laughable if it were not sad. He built himself a huge theatre and a palatial castle. In 1846, when by dint of impudence he had secured from the government a commission to "write up" Algeria, then a new colony, he did not scruple to turn the transport that was to convey him there into a pleasure-yacht, and so to visit at the public expense Carthage, Tunis, and other places that he thought he could exploit with his pen. The government, however, was less long-suffering than the public; publishers too began to take umbrage; lawsuits multiplied in his path, and the Revolution of 1848 crowned his misfortunes with a partial eclipse of popularity. From this time on, his attempts to attract public attention, if not esteem, such as his association with Garibaldi in 1860, served only to draw on him the ridicule of the thoughtful, — a ridicule that yielded to pity as it grew clear that his fertile brain was giving way as his moral nature had already done.

His friend the critic Jules Janin thus summarizes his genius: "A mind capable of learning all, forgetting all, comprehending all, neglecting all. Rare mind, rare attention, subtle spirit, gross talent. Quick comprehension, execution barely sufficient, an artisan rather than an artist. Skilful to forge, but poor to chisel, and awkward in working with the tools that he knew so well how to make. An inexhaustible mingling of

dreams, falsehoods, truths, fancies, impudence, and propriety; of the vagabond and the seigneur, of rich and poor. Sparkling and noisy, the most wilful and the most facile of men; a mixture of the tricky lawyer and of the epic poet; of Achilles and Thersites; swaggering, boastful, vain and — a good fellow." Quite a unique figure even among the vagaries of Romantic genius, of which he is the supreme type, he left imitators but no successors. He died in 1870, poor, but relieved from want and tenderly cared for by his son, a man of equal talent and greater probity.

All the novelists of this generation partook more or less of the Romantic spirit. Traces of it can be found in Mérimée, and it dominates a large section of the work of Sand and Balzac, though these must be ranked, with Stendhal, as the founders of Naturalistic fiction. It was in the nature of Romantic "individualism" and "liberty" that the limits of its sway should be ill-defined, — that even the same writer should seem at one time wholly under its influence, and at another quite independent of it, or, like Gautier, subtly undermining its power. For the two decades that preceded the Revolution of 1848 every writer that led, every reader that welcomed, the advent of literature in new fields, the opening of new paths, was a Romanticist. In the advance they had the cohesion of a common impulse and a common enthusiasm; but for constructive effort this cohesion failed. Each struck out on his own path; and all but the supreme genius of Hugo were pushed aside at last by the Naturalistic wave.

CHAPTER VI.

THE YOUNG HUGO.

VICTOR HUGO is incomparably the greatest French writer of this century, and, except for Goethe, perhaps the greatest of our time. His first volume appeared in 1822; his literary activity continued till his death, in 1885, and has been prolonged beyond it by posthumous volumes. Thus for nearly two-thirds of the century he was a leader in French literature, and for the greater part of that time he was pre-eminently the leader. But since he represents the supreme effort of an egoistical, individualistic movement, it is only by examining in some detail the circumstances and changing fortunes of his career that his character or his work can be appreciated.[1]

[1] Born in 1802. Poetry: Odes, 1822 and 1826; Orientales, 1827; Feuilles d'automne, 1831; Chants du crépuscule, 1835; Voix intérieures, 1837; Les Rayons et les ombres, 1840; Les Châtiments, 1853; Les Contemplations, 1856; La Légende des siècles, I., 1859; Chansons des rues et des bois, 1865; L'Année terrible, 1872; La Légende des siècles, II. and III., 1877, 1883; L'Art d'être grand-père, 1877; Quatre vents de l'esprit, 1881. Drama: Cromwell, 1827; Hernani, 1830; Marion de Lorme, 1831; Le Roi s'amuse, 1832; Lucrèce Borgia, Marie Tudor, 1833; Angelo, 1835; Ruy Blas, 1838; Les Burgraves, 1843. Fiction: Han d'Islande, 1823; Bug-Jargal, 1825; Dernier jour d'un condamné, 1828; Notre-Dame de Paris, 1831; Les Misérables, 1862; Les Travailleurs de la mer, 1866; L'Homme qui rit, 1869; Quatre-vingt-treize, 1874. Political: Napoléon le petit, 1852; Histoire d'un crime, 1877; Actes et paroles, 1875–1876.

Criticism: Brunetière, Poésie lyrique, i. 181, ii. 75; Faguet, xix. siècle, 153; Dupuy, V. Hugo, l'homme et le poète, and V. Hugo, son œuvre poétique; Renouvier, V. Hugo, le poète; Duval, Dictionnaire des métaphores de V. Hugo. See also the literature cited in Lanson, p. 1027.

He himself has summed up in familiar lines the condition of Europe and his own at the time of his birth. "Rome," he says, "was replacing Sparta" in the French Republic. "Napoleon was already appearing beneath Bonaparte; the forehead of the emperor was breaking in many a place the narrow mask of the First Consul. Then in Besançon, an ancient Spanish city, there was born, of Breton and of Lorraine blood, a child without color, sight, or voice; so weak that like some fairy thing he was abandoned by all save his mother. This child whom Life was effacing from her book, who had not even a to-morrow to live, is I."[1] This climax is noteworthy and characteristic, for Hugo never doubted that it was a climax, nor that what was happening to him was of primary importance to humanity. Noteworthy, too, is the site of his birth. Spain finds an echo, not only in his early work, but in the whole character of his thought. And his parentage united significant elements. His father had been a soldier, and, as Hugo tells us, one of the first volunteers of the Republic; while his mother was a Vendéan, who, as her son tells us, "when a poor girl of fifteen, had

[1] Ce siècle avait deux ans! Rome remplaçait Sparte,
Déjà Napoléon perçait sous Bonaparte,
Et du premier consul, déjà par maint endroit
Le front de l'empereur brisait le masque étroit.
Alors dans Besançon, vieille ville espagnole,
Jeté comme la graine au gré de l'air qui vole,
Naquit d'un sang breton et lorrain à la fois,
Un enfant sans couleur, sans regard et sans voix;
Si débile, qu'il fut, ainsi qu'une chimère,
Abandonné de tous, excepté de sa mère . . .
Cet enfant que la vie effaçait de son livre,
Et qui n'avait pas même un lendemain à vivre,
C'est moi.

(Feuilles d'automne, I.)

fled through the forests, a *brigande*, like Madame de Bonchamp and Madame de Rochejacquelin." This however is, to speak charitably, a mirage of Hugo's imagination, for in fact she was the daughter of a sea-captain at Nantes, and her future husband had made her acquaintance there while serving gallantly in Vendée amid scenes that inspired many episodes in his son's novel "Quatre-vingt-treize." Later he distinguished himself in Italy, Corsica, and Spain; but these years were passed by Victor with his mother in Paris, until in 1811 General Hugo summoned his family to join him in Madrid, where he had risen to high rank in the service of King Joseph.

A year had hardly passed before the French cause grew desperate in Spain, and the General was constrained to send his family back to Paris again; but the months that he had spent there left an ineffaceable mark on the impressionable mind of the boy. That strange people filled him with the spirit of romance. "Spain showed me its convents and bastiles," he says; "Bourgos, its cathedrals with their gothic spires; Irun, its roofs of wood; Vittoria, its towers; and thou, Valladolid, thy palaces of families proud of the chains that rust in their courtyards. My recollections budded in my heated heart; I went about singing verses with a subdued voice, and my mother, watching in secret all my steps, wept, smiled, and said, 'A fairy speaks to him whom we see not.'" [1] From the first to extreme

[1] L'Espagne me montrait ses couvents, ses bastilles;
Burgos, sa cathédrale aux gothiques aiguilles;
Irun, ses toits de bois; Vittoria, ses tours;
Et toi, Valladolid, tes palais de familles,
Fiers de laisser rouiller des chaînes dans leurs cours.
Mes souvenirs germaient dans mon âme échauffée,
J'allais chantant des vers d'une voix étouffée;

old age, Hugo's work bears unmistakable marks of this year in Spain. His first dramatic success, "Hernani," and his last dramatic poem, "Torquemada," recall Spanish towns at which the convoy halted on his return; and a deformed servant whom he met and feared at his convent school in Madrid reappears in his novels as Habribrah, as Quasimodo, and as Triboulet.[1]

From the winter of 1812 till the fall of the Empire, Victor was with his mother in Paris, living in Les Feuillantines, an abandoned convent that reappears in "Les Misérables." The Restoration caused some estrangement between General Hugo, who had defended Thionville with desperate heroism against the Allies, and his wife, always a Catholic and now a declared Royalist, who breathed more freely under the Bourbons. Victor was sent to school, unwillingly it seems, for he recalls with passionate tenderness the happiness of his home nurture in the mystic associations of the old convent and its beautiful garden. "Woods and fields make the education of all great minds," he said; and this free life "made blossom everywhere in my nature that pity for mankind, sad result

> Et ma mère en secret observant tous mes pas,
> Pleurait et souriait, disant: C'est une fée
> Qui lui parle et qu'on ne voit pas.
>
> (Odes et ballades, V. ix. 3.)

A very full account of Hugo's life up to 1843 is "V. Hugo raconté par un témoin de sa vie," practically an autobiography, in which the author, unlike the Charles V. of his "Hernani," "se regarde toujours en beau." He never found it easy to tell the truth about himself, at least consecutively, as has been pitilessly demonstrated by Biré, V. Hugo avant 1830, and V. Hugo après 1830 (2 vols.).

[1] Hugo describes him as "a humpbacked dwarf, with a scarlet face, tight-curled hair, in a red linen vest, with blue plush breeches, yellow stockings, and russet shoes." Many lyrics, especially among the "Orientales," are of purely Spanish inspiration.

hidden beneath so many causes, that comes to us from the contemplation of existence."[1] In any case the boy had suffered no great loss by delay, for he speedily distinguished himself at school, and was already busy with poems, — "follies before I was born," as he called them in later years. Among these was an epic of Roland of Roncesvalles, who was to inspire some of the noblest verses of the "Légende des siècles." Then there was a "Déluge" in Miltonic style, as well as plentiful sketches of tragedies, melodramas, and comic operas. Forced by his father to technological studies that he abhorred, he wrote in his diary at fourteen, "I wish to be Chateaubriand or nothing," — a sentiment that marks at once his ambition and his epoch.

While still at school and but fifteen, Hugo competed for an Academic prize with a poem on "The happiness that study procures in all situations of life." Honorable mention was awarded to his three hundred verses; and thus, though subordinated to the not very illustrious Loyson and Santine, he won the notice and patronage of some Academicians who assisted his literary beginnings. Of far greater influence on his development, however, was his growing affiliation with the group of young and enthusiastic aspirants to fame who formed the Cénacle of 1824. It was under their stimulus that he wrote his first novel, "Bug-Jargal," though he did not cast his lot fully with them till 1826. The story was afterward remodelled; but even in its boyish

[1] Et les bois et les champs, du sage seul compris
Font l'éducation de tous les grands esprits! . . .
Et nous ferons germer de toutes parts en lui
Pour l'homme, triste effet perdu sous tant de causes,
Cette pitié qui naît du spectacle des choses.
(Les Rayons et les ombres, xix.)

form [1] it shows the promise of some of his most striking qualities. It has the same close juxtaposition of the tragic and the grotesque that is found in his later work; the same love of the moth for the star that is the mainspring of "Ruy Blas" and "Notre-Dame;" the same chivalrous honor that summons Hernani to his death; and a generous share of those "moving accidents by flood and field, of hairbreadth 'scapes in the imminent deadly breach, of being taken by the insolent foe," and of the vivid descriptions attendant thereon, that mark "Les Misérables" and "Quatre-vingt-treize."

The scene of "Bug-Jargal" is Hayti; the time the insurrection of the Blacks in 1793; the hero a negro prince and slave, whose magnanimous heart is won by the blue-blooded charms of Marie, the daughter of a wealthy planter and soon to be the wife of D'Auverney, an officer, and the narrator of the tale. To rescue her, even for his rival, this chivalrous African devises numerous feats of self-sacrificing heroism, and crowns all by giving his life for his love. But of more interest than this sentimental slave is the negro kinglet Biassou, the savage chief of the rebels, and the villanous dwarf Habribrah, whose weird end as he is swept away in the torrent of a cavernous abyss is a masterpiece of Romantic imagination, worthy to take a place beside the famous fight with the devil-fish in "The Toilers of the Sea."

But during these early years the tendency of Hugo's talent is toward lyric poetry rather than fiction. In 1819 he won three prizes at the Jeux Floraux of Toulouse, — annual poetic competitions, such as are still held in Wales; and his odes were of such intrinsic merit as to win him the epithet "sublime child" from Soumet,

[1] Reprinted in "V. Hugo raconté," ii. 181–223.

or, as he liked to think, from Chateaubriand himself.[1] Thus encouraged, the young author, in spite of very slender resources, abandoned his technological studies, and, while ostensibly studying law, co-operated in founding a literary journal, "Le Conservateur littéraire," a strange title for the herald of Romanticism. But though this venture came at an auspicious time and had the support of the rising genius of Lamartine, he was soon obliged to abandon the costly experiment. A few months later his mother died. Then his father, disgusted that he should have abandoned his profession, withdrew his allowance; and between losses and deprivations the young poet was reduced for a year to considerable straits, which were the harder to bear as he was impatient to marry Adèle Foucher, a child-friend of the Feuillantines. Reminiscences of these gloomy days and of a duel in which his atrabilious stubbornness had involved him linger in the Marius episodes of "Les Misérables" and in the duel of "Marion de Lorme."

He had now a book of odes ready for the press; but no publisher would take it, even as a gift, and he could not afford to print it at his own expense. It was due to the generosity of his brother Abel that "Odes et poésies diverses" appeared in 1822. The book paid expenses, and left the author some seven hundred francs. But it did much more than that, for it attracted the attention of King Louis, who liked to think himself a patron of letters, and accorded the author a pension of two thousand francs. With this and hope Victor married Adèle in October, 1822; and his courage was justified by a domestic life happy and unclouded to its close.

[1] V. Hugo raconté, ii. 235.

These early poems show Hugo's strength and weakness, but each in a still undeveloped form. He could not have heralded his future career as a writer better than by such brilliantly rhetorical lyrics, for both the lyric and the rhetorical strain ran through all his epics, his dramas, his satires, and his prose. And in these very first notes the youth of twenty shows that he knew already both what he wanted to do and how he proposed to do it. "He would put the movement of the ode in ideas rather than in words," he said; that is, he would prefer harmony between thought and metre to symmetry of form, neglect of which was the corner-stone of the Romantic "liberties." But in his case Genius was justified of her child. His verses sing themselves to the attentive ear with a happy concord of sound and sense, and a richness of rhythmic melody that till then had been approached only by the "Meditations" of Lamartine. Then, too, following in the steps of Chateaubriand, Hugo discarded mythology, with all its apparently antiquated apparatus, and made his appeal to those religious sentiments, universally understood and generally shared, that Boileau had thought incapable of poetic treatment. But Hugo went further than Chateaubriand. "Poetry," he declares in his preface to the Odes of 1822, is "that which belongs to the inner nature of all things." This definition made his work subjectively individualistic, sometimes with more artificiality than sincerity; and though we see now that lyric poetry is in its nature subjective, this position challenged in the France of 1822 a tradition venerable by two centuries of abused power. However, the verses of this first volume hardly illustrated the new position, and in their metrical form there was little to attract the criticism even of strict Classicists.

These odes breathe the ardent royalism that he had learned at his mother's knee, and an equally ardent but less clearly defined Catholicism, — partly also an inheritance from the *brigande* of Nantes, partly no doubt a convention necessary for a young man who would be "Chateaubriand or nothing." In "La Lyre et la harpe"[1] he opposes Christian poetry to pagan quite as the "Genius of Christianity" had done; his "Liberty"[2] is that in which Christ has set us free, and he has some not wholly perfunctory praises of chastity and martyrdom. He tells us that "his songs fly toward God as the eagle toward the sun, for to the Lord I owe the gift of speech." But, after all, one detects less dignity and true feeling here than in the poems that throb with political passion, always intense in Hugo through all the kaleidoscopic changes of his life. Perhaps the high-water mark of these first odes is in the closing stanzas of "Buonaparte;" but he soon surpassed himself in "Les Deux îles" (1825), and the superb Ode to the Vendôme Column written in 1827 is one of the finest pieces of his earlier manner.[3] But the Christian odes not only lacked the majesty of these political verses, they lacked also the warm tenderness of the domestic poems and recollections of childhood,[4] which deepened with the birth of his daughter Léopoldine (1826), and remained one of Hugo's most sympathetic and popular traits.

A year after the first odes were printed, Hugo again ventured on journalism in the short-lived "Muse Française." He had also completed a novel, but it was so very Romantic that for the present he preferred anonymous publication. This was "Han d'Is-

[1] Odes iv. 2.
[2] Odes ii. 6.
[3] Odes i. 11; iii. 6, 7.
[4] For instance, Odes v. 9, 12, 17.

lande," of which he said truly that the only thing in it based on personal experience was the love of a young man, and the only thing based on observation the love of a young girl; that is to say, it was the immediate literary result of his betrothal and marriage. But for the rest, and the greater part, Hugo drew on the fountain of imagination that had flowed so freely in "Bug-Jargal." The scene is laid in far Norway, where Hugo had never been, and the central figure is a monster such as Hugo had never seen. Han, even less human than Biassou, consorts with a polar bear, who assists the energies of his double brain to the destruction of a regiment that has offended him. Here, as in "Bug-Jargal," there is vivid imagination, with skill in the narration of scenes of terror and feats of breathless daring; but both stories are differentiated from the mere tale of adventure by a grotesque humor that gives them a marked individuality. On the other hand, the pathos is forced and ineffective; but the same might be said of all such efforts in this generation, which exhibited its emotions with what seems to us a morbid delight.

Hugo's creative imagination reappears, as free and vigorous but more refined and chastened, in the "New Odes and Ballads" of 1826. Here first he allied himself openly with the Romanticists, attacked the current and we may add fundamental restriction of the *genres*, and demanded "liberty in art," — whatever that may mean. In practice it seems to have amounted to the emancipation of his lyric individuality. His versification and rhythm already begin to echo his personality,[1] and several poems show the beginnings

[1] E. g., "Le Pas d'armes du roi Jean" and "La Chasse du burgrave." (Ballades xi., xii.)

of that sympathetic study of the mediæval mind that is associated with Romanticism.[1]

Hugo now held the first place among the younger poets. The king had increased his pension, and made him a member of the Legion of Honor, and by 1827 all recognized in him the standard-bearer of the movement. This leadership he asserted and confirmed by his first drama, "Cromwell," and especially by its elaborate preface, full of dramaturgical observations more opportune than new, for they had been timidly taught by Lemercier in France, were already recognized in England as essential elements in the Shaksperean drama, and had been deduced with convincing logic by Lessing for the German stage. But if the preface to "Cromwell" was not original, it was very fruitful, and it was moreover the best piece of French prose that the century had yet produced, although the dogmatic emphasis that wraps startling assertions in an endless train of brilliant metaphors does not always suffice to hide the writer's superficiality or even sometimes his ignorance.

The kernel of this eloquent outburst appears to be that literature had outlived the lyric and epic forms and had reached the age of the drama, which, because it was more true to nature, had greater power to move and sway the hearts and minds of men. As a matter of fact, we know that precisely the contrary was true,—that the Romantic movement was essentially lyric, and that the century has been pre-eminently lyric in its verse and epic in its prose; but Hugo thought "the drama the only complete poetry of our time, the only poetry with a national character." To give this "complete poetry" scope, the stage must have larger liberty,

[1] E. g., "Une Fée" and "La Ronde du sabbat."

especially in subject; the tragic and comic must be mingled, and the grotesque placed beside the sublime should show, as in Shakspere, the irony of destiny. He did not aim, as La Chaussée had done in the eighteenth century, at a fusion of the *genres* but at an alternation, and so far as this tended to make the interest centre in character, he followed Diderot, though perhaps unconsciously. He made an effective plea also for the extension of the tragic vocabulary, the results of which have been already noted. He never departed, however, from the fundamental conventions of the stage, and those who hailed the "brute and savage nature" of his realism did him an injustice. His drama is quite as far from that of the new Naturalists, and much farther from a natural drama than the tragedies of Racine or the comedies of Molière.

For Hugo was never a dramatist; he was a lyric poet who wrote dramas. The psychological development of his characters is extremely weak. Antithesis, pushed to the verge of credibility and even over it, is the only complexity that they possess, and the minor personages have not even that factitious interest. The action seems in constant danger of stranding, and is indeed kept afloat only by the heroic measures that we associate with the melodrama. It is a little surprising, after the oracular declarations of the preface, to find "Cromwell" timid in its treatment of the unities of time and place, which are subordinate, and rash only in casting away the fundamental unity of action. The scene is confined to thirty-three hours and to London. Such unity of action as the play possesses hangs about the question, Will the Protector be King? a question posed in Act I., affirmed in Act II.,

denied in Act III., reaffirmed with hesitation in Act IV., and denied in Act V.

Mr. Swinburne's somewhat hysterical admiration declares this play "sufficient to establish the author's fame for all ages in which poetry and thought, passion and humor, subtle truth of character, stately perfection of structure, facile force of dialogue, and splendid eloquence of style continue to be admired and enjoyed."[1] But surely the judicious reader — if haply readers of "Cromwell" can be called judicious — will see in this huge mass, whose length, though not that alone, excluded it from the stage, no masterpiece of any kind, but rather the first essay of a man of genius who has felt the power of Corneille and Shakspere and attempts an imitation of their processes. Indeed, whole scenes recall passages in "Hamlet," "Julius Cæsar," and "Macbeth;" and the would-be Corneillian style is often antiquated and forced, while occasionally it falls to the level of the mock-heroic. What is most interesting to note here, in the evolution of the drama, is the great number of persons brought on the stage contrary to French tradition, as well as the cultivation of "local color," which though, as usual with the Romanticists, untrue to fact, is vivid and successfully maintained.

But in this very year the "Ode to the Vendôme Column" should have shown Hugo that his strength and that of Romanticism lay in lyric poetry. It struck the key-note of the best work of his prime, and it showed also that the glories of the Napoleonic legend were beginning to dispel the prejudices of a Royalist nurture and the teachings of sober reason. Provoked by an insult to the marshals of Napoleon, it was

[1] Victor Hugo, p. 11.

written while his blood was at white heat; but if the ode bears marks of emotion, it bears none of haste. Such lines as those that prophesy how "Vendée shall sharpen its sword on the monument of Waterloo," or recall how Germany bears printed on its forehead "the sandal of Charlemagne, the spur of Napoleon,"[1] had been till then approached only by Corneille. And this ode is no isolated flight, though before Hugo had completed another volume of lyrics he turned once more to the drama and produced "Amy Robsart," a play taken from an episode in Walter Scott's "Kenilworth," which failed on the stage and was not printed till many years later. He wrote also "Marion de Lorme," which the censorship would not suffer to be either acted or printed, thanks to a fancied allusion to the then reigning Charles X.; and so it happened that "Cromwell" was followed not by works that only the fame of their author preserves from oblivion, but by "Les Orientales," one of the most original of all his volumes of verse, — a collection that Brunetière calls "the gymnastics of a talent in training, studies in design, color, and speed;" while Swinburne pronounces it "the most musical and many-colored volume that ever had glorified the language," though the careful reader will not seldom find the mark of Romantic artificiality where he sought the mint-stamp of genuine poet-gold.

Hugo's Orient is that of Byron and Ali Pasha, but it

[1] Tout s'arme, et la Vendée aiguisera son glaive
Sur la pierre de Waterloo
. . . . . .
L'histoire . . .
Montre empreints aux deux fronts du vautour d'Allemagne
La sandale de Charlemagne,
L'éperon de Napoléon. (Odes, III. vii. 4.)

is also the Moorish Orient of Spain, some breath of which lingered in his recollections of childhood; most of all, however, it is the Orient of his imagination. On the whole, the Spanish pieces are the truest and best; but "Les Djinns," the most remarkable single poem in the volume and one of the most striking pieces of metrical art in the world, is more Turkish than Mauresque. "Le Voile," too, an Albanian tale of jealous family honor, is astonishingly brilliant in its rendering of a purely fictitious local color. But in "Vœu" and in "Sara la baigneuse" there is a plaintive delicacy and a luxurious joy of girlish life that strike a more realistic Spanish note. As a piece of riotous fancy, the ode "Fire in the Sky," a dance of Sodom and Gomorrah whirling to damnation, surpasses in terror as it does in art the prose of "Han" or of "Bug-Jargal." Very striking and with a touch of philosophic symbolism is "Mazeppa," borne away in a rush of destiny on his fiery horse, as a youth by his genius, but overcoming and conquering at last. Yet these word-pictures are fruits for whose enjoyment the foreigner must strive and climb. Let us pass to that which, though less exquisite, hangs on lower branches.

The "Orientales" were followed by "Hernani," a drama not often acted, but still read by all who care for the history of the stage or for French literature, because it marks the triumph of Romanticism, — a triumph extorted from the Bourbon dynasty only a few months before they went hence to be seen no more. "Hernani," as has been said, was not the first Romantic drama, but it stood for a principle, as Dumas' "Henri III." had not done. The story of the conflict over it has often been told, but by none more graphically than

by Gautier, its protagonist.[1] The play had been accepted by the Théâtre Français in October, 1829; but it took nearly six months to overcome the opposition of individual prejudice and Academic tradition. Delay only heated the passions of both sides; and it was with confident though calculating generalship that Hugo published his determination to employ no *claque* of hired applauders, for by this he made the play a standard of battle around which every Romanticist might fight for the cause of individual emancipation. He thus secured a devoted band of enthusiastic young men who delighted to enflame classical prejudices, not alone by their views, but by their clothes. Historical is the garb of Gautier, who led his cohort to the first performance in green trousers, a scarlet vest, black coat trimmed with velvet, and an overcoat of gray with green satin lining, the whole set off by long wavy curls. Among his fellows were Balzac the novelist, Delacroix the painter, Berlioz the composer, and many lesser champions of "liberty" in the liberal arts. The opposition was more numerous and hardly less intense. Unreasoning support was met with equally unreasoning condemnation; and from February 26 to June 5, 1830, the battle raged nightly, till there was not a verse that had not at some time been applauded or hissed. The result, if not a victory for "Hernani," was a victory for all that it represented. The fetters of the unities, as Boileau understood them, were broken. No further organized effort was made to resist the retrograde evolution of the Romantic drama to its collapse with Hugo's "Burgraves" in 1843.

Metrically and stylistically "Hernani" was epoch-

[1] Histoire du romantisme. See also Paul Albert, Les Origines du romantisme, and Coppée, La Bataille d'Hernani.

making. Hugo was far more radical here than in his odes, and he boasts justly of his services in restoring the *mot propre*, the concrete noun, to a place of honor. Now first, as he says, what Delille and his fellows would have called the "olfactories" became a nose, "the long golden fruit" a pear; he "crushed the spirals of paraphrase," and "said to Vaugelas, You are only a jaw-bone."[1] Then, too, his prosody was here more free, — perhaps as a result of his study of Goethe's alexandrines in the second part of "Faust," which Hugo read at this time. But as a drama whether of plot or of character the play was fatally weak. Since Schiller's "Robbers," all outlaws had been magnanimous; but Hernani had a *pundonor* that even Castilians found exaggerated. Hernani owes his life to Don Ruy Gomez, and has promised to hold it at his call. Both love Doña Sol, who, as a Romantic heroine, naturally prefers the bandit to the duke. But as Hernani is about to enjoy the fruition of his love, his rival recalls his promise by a signal on the horn, and honor forces the bridegroom to take the poison that his bride generously shares.

This close has much pathos, but it is rather elegiac

[1] J'ai dit à la narine: Et mais! tu n'est qu'un nez!
J'ai dit au long fruit d'or: Mais tu n'est qu'une poire!
J'ai dit à Vaugelas: Tu n'es qu'une mâchoire! . . .
J'ai de la périphrase écrasé les spirales. (Contemplations, I. vii.)

An example of these "spirals" may not be without interest. Du Belloy, in his "Siège de Calais," which a contemporary critic calls "one of the two most lachrymose successes of the eighteenth century" (its date is 1765), wants to say that dog's meat was dear; he says it thus: —

Le plus vil aliment, rébut de la misère,
Mais aux derniers abois ressource terrible et chère,
De la fidélité respectable soutien,
Manque à l'or prodigué du riche citoyen.

than dramatic. Indeed, Hugo is never as successful in passages of love or humor as in rhetorical eloquence and in satire. So here the crown of the drama is the long monologue of Charles V. at the tomb of Charlemagne, and one of the most striking passages is the description of a series of portraits; but neither monologue nor description advances the action, nor does the amorous dialogue of the closing scene, which owes its interest to the epic strife of implacable hatred and undying love. It is quite true that this strife is founded on a situation strained and dramatically unreal; but the same stricture would apply to the whole Romantic drama, not alone in France, but also in Germany.

To the Naturalistic mind much of the sentiment of "Hernani" has become mawkish, and many of the tirades seem mere beating the air. The conventions of Italian opera may maintain the popularity of Verdi's "Ernani;" but Hugo's play has ceased to attract the great public of the stage, and it met with but a cold reception at its recent revival. The theatrical public has not the same literary training as the reading public, and, in the nature of the case, it can neither dwell on what it enjoys, nor pass lightly over the foibles and weakness of Romantic exaggeration. But if the cultured reader makes the Romantic equation at the outset, and does not judge the work by strictly dramatic standards, he will not fail to feel the charm of a generous warmth of emotion, a throbbing overflowing life that thrills through all, and he may summon in vain his memories of Corneille to find a scene where tragic admiration is so nobly roused as by the emperor in the cathedral vaults of Aix-la-Chapelle, as he stands by the tomb of the great Charlemagne.

It will be clear that "Hernani" lacks unity of action. Precisely the best scenes have no connection with the central situation. The whole fifth act might be spared.[1] Now, the cause of this lack of unity in action is clear, and a recognition of it will help in judging Hugo's other dramas. Hugo has always a thesis at heart, a part of his own individuality to display; and he cares more for this than for the development of character or dramatic action. Therefore he tends constantly to exchange the dramatic for the lyric or declamatory strain. Therefore, more and more with each succeeding drama, his characters become symbols, till at last in "Les Burgraves" they are proclaimed by the author himself to be such. Therefore, in every play situations are laboriously contrived, scenes and even acts are crudely inserted, that Hugo may declaim behind the mask of his hero. And it is noteworthy that it is just these, the most undramatic passages, that are best worth remembering.

Since the virtues and vices of "Hernani" reappear in all the dramas of Hugo's first period, it is convenient to treat them together, that we may reserve for the close his lyrics in verse and in prose. He had said, in a preface to "Hernani," that this "was only the first stone of an edifice that existed complete in his mind." Only the whole would show the value and appropriateness of this drama, as of a Moorish porch to a Gothic cathedral. There is a certain truth in his antithesis.

[1] This was the main point of "N, I, Ni," one of the many parodies of the time. After the fourth act, at the first performance, the spectators, abetted no doubt by the *claque*, prepared to leave the house, when the manager appeared before the curtain and said: "Gentlemen, perhaps you thought the play over. Any one would have thought so; but there is another act, for the second and true dénouement." See Biré, op. cit. p. 502.

"Hernani" is more distinctly Spanish in its uniform tone, less Gothic in its contrasts of fair and foul, tragic and comic, grotesque and sublime, than any of the plays that followed it; more even than the earlier "Marion de Lorme," to which the Revolution of July now opened the theatre.

Though one cannot, with Dumas, regard this play as Hugo's best, it is in many ways the most interesting of his dramas. The scene is the Paris of Louis XIII. and of Richelieu; the subject, rehabilitation of the courtesan Marion by her true love for Didier, the rather dubious hero of the play, a sort of *réchauffé* of René, pessimistically sentimental and as absolutely foreign to the age of Louis XIII. as to ours. Didier has been involved in a duel, and is sentenced to execution; but Marion saves him, placating the judge by the sacrifice of her painfully regained virtue, preferring the life of her lover to his esteem. He, however, spurns her sacrifice, and will not be saved at such a price. So ended the "Marion de Lorme" of 1830. Later Mérimée persuaded Hugo to soften the conclusion by an exquisitely pathetic scene in which Marion and Didier take leave of each other forever.

Such a drama can have little charm for English taste, and the beauties of the execution have never won it a wide circle of readers among us. In France, however, "Marion" became the mother of a numerous family of dramas and novels that dwelt with morbid delight on the possible reclamation to purity of mind and heart of fallen women by love. At first the emotional generosity of the Romantic spirit caused the balance to incline toward a charity wider even than Hugo's; but after a quarter of a century of ladies with and without camellias, a more sober mind returned with *Augier's "Mariage* d'Olympe."

It has been already said that the duel in "Marion" was taken from the experience of the struggling poet. Traces of his father's campaign in Vendée can be found in all his longer works for the next three years. During the rage of that civil strife a Republican soldier returning from service on the Rhine had been shot by an ambushed peasant, who, when he plundered the corpse of the murdered man, discovered his own son. Then the mother took her own life, and the father gave himself up to the Republicans with the certainty of a speedy execution. This idea, a beloved child unwittingly killed by a parent, forms the tragic conclusion of "Notre-Dame," and reappears in the dramas "Le Roi s'amuse" and "Lucrèce Borgia."

"Le Roi s'amuse" is a drama striking in itself and in the prominence that it gives to the Gothic intermingling of tragic and grotesque, as of the saints and imps on a cathedral tower. The plot of the play is familiar through Verdi's opera "Rigoletto;" but though it appeared under the more liberal censorship of the Orleanists, it shared the fate of "Marion," being prohibited after a single performance by the King, who thought he discerned in it allusions to his father, Philippe Égalité, of Revolutionary ill-fame, — allusions that were not flattering, as indeed how should they be? But the royal decree revealed the poet in a new and very congenial capacity. In the legal proceedings that ensued, he made an appeal for the liberty of the press that showed him without a living peer as an emotional orator. Whether "Le Roi s'amuse" would have succeeded in 1832 we cannot know. On the modern stage it had the same respectful but lukewarm reception that fell to "Hernani," and for the same reasons.

But though its extravagance stands in the way of its present success, "Le Roi s'amuse" is well worth careful reading; for it is perhaps the most Hugoesque of all his dramas. The play suggests manifold points of comparison, and nearly as many of contrast, with Lessing's "Emilia Galotti." We are shown King Francis I., rich, careless, sparing neither the feelings nor the rights of any in his reckless hunt for pleasure, whose favorite jingling rhyme,

Souvent femme varie,
Bien fol qui s'y fie,

is the apt expression of his easy virtue. He is not bad nor malicious, only thoughtless and libertine. In his wanton humor his eye falls on the fair daughter of his deformed dwarf, Triboulet, who combines with a museum of vices the one virtue of passionate love for his child,—a love that Hugo attributes to this toy and sport of royal favor precisely because no one would ever associate it with him. Triboulet discovers the king's fancy, and, frantic with paternal jealousy, determines to kill him. But his daughter immolates herself to save her royal lover. Triboulet's accomplices sew her body in a sack and cast her through a window. He stands below to gloat over his victim; but just as he prepares to throw the body into the river, he is startled by hearing the king himself pass by, humming his familiar air. And so the mimic world wags from utter frivolity and ferocity to extremest misery, as the awful truth dawns on the father; and the curtain falls on her unveiled corpse, and Triboulet lying in a swoon beside her.

Here contrast is pushed to the uttermost; the most generous and exalted sentiments are put in the mouth of Triboulet, just as they had been attributed the year

before to his counterpart, Quasimodo, the hunchback of "Notre-Dame," in a way that could not but make the judicious grieve, though before this tragedy of paternity both criticism and parody were silent.

In the preface to "Cromwell" Hugo had pronounced verse the fit vehicle for dramatic expression. With "Lucrezia Borgia"[1] he turned in 1833 to prose; and into that more facile form he cast in the following years "Marie Tudor" and "Angelo." This concession to Naturalism was received with varied feelings by his fellow Romanticists.[2] It is clear, however, that given the Romantic drama as Hugo conceived it, with its exalted and sublimated passion, its exaggerated emotions and antitheses, and its fundamental distortion of nature, its best medium will be verse, because it, too, is artificial; just as prose is the fit medium for the social comedy of our day. But though their form was an æsthetic error, these prose dramas have intrinsic interest, and they served also as helpful precedents to writers who would have found the alexandrine a clog even with the new suppleness that Hugo had given to it.

Into the plots of these plays we need not enter. "Lucrezia Borgia" broadens the charitable mantle of "Marion," to show how maternal love may redeem the deepest moral obliquity. Here also the parent is the unconscious cause of the child's death, and only its name connects the drama with history. One notes, however, with pain a concession to the melodrama, a sensational "supping full of horrors," to tickle the ears of the groundlings. The curtain fell amid popular applause on eight corpses; but sager criticism saw from

[1] This play is the foundation of Donizetti's opera of like name.

[2] Gautier loyally averred that Hugo's prose was as good as his verse; but only, he added, because it was *his* prose.

the first that there was here a marked fall, both ethical and æsthetic, from the standard of "Marion" or even of "Hernani." And in the dramatic action, also, there was more wanton strength than supple deftness.

"Marie Tudor" showed a further decline, for it was not even a good melodrama. Hugo says he wished to show a queen who should be "great in her royalty and true in her womanhood." But his Mary is a caricature, and not a dramatic one, and the spectator's suspense is of a kind that cannot be dignified with the name of tragic. The play lacks unity, and seldom deviates into scenes of interest.[1] "Angelo" is better constructed, but its scope is too all-embracing. This drama purports to have no less a mission than to present "universal femininity" in two types, "the woman in society and the woman out of society," and in two men, to show "all the relations that man can have with woman on the one hand, with society on the other." Such a programme might seem to make criticism superfluous; and, indeed, the plot, melodramatic *à outrance*, with its sleeping draughts and poisons, marks, like the caverns and secret doors of other plays, the author's lack of dramatic sense. It may be true that as sensational plays "Angelo" and "Lucrezia" are as good as "Hernani" and "Le Roi s'amuse;" but that merit would give none of them more than a transient life. When the charm of form in poetic dialogue and declamation was taken away, what remained lost nearly all its purely literary value. Hugo had overestimated the place of the stage as a pulpit for ethical preaching, or at least he had overestimated his power as a preacher.

[1] "V. Hugo raconté," iii. 183 sqq., contains a painfully fatuous account of the reception of "Marie Tudor."

Soon after Hugo had freed his bosom of this perilous stuff, there bloomed in his hand a little flower, a lyric drama, slight and frail, almost forgotten to-day, — his "Esmeralda," an exquisite libretto for an opera taken from his own "Notre-Dame." Perhaps this return to the metrical form, slight though it was, may have aided in persuading him that his dramatic aspirations required the aid of his poetic genius; for he returned to verse in "Ruy Blas," which, though far from faultless, ranks next to "Hernani" in popular esteem, and above it in the opinion of some critics. It certainly shows his dramatic theories in their extreme development. Nowhere are the contrasts between grave and gay, tragic and grotesque, pushed to such violent and rapid alternation as here, both by precept in the preface and by practice in the play. In his own words: "The two opposite electricities of tragedy and comedy meet, and the spark that darts between them is 'Ruy Blas.'"

In his preface the author seeks, as usual, to explain the esoteric meaning of his piece; but if he succeeds in making himself clear, it is only by making his play fundamentally ridiculous, however admirable its isolated parts may be. He wishes, he tells us, to show how society has changed in Spain since Hernani's day; how beneath the nobility "a shadowy something stirs, great, sombre, unknown, — the people. The people, that possesses the future but not the present, orphaned, poor, intelligent, and strong; placed very low, aspiring very high; with the mark of servitude on its back, and in its heart the premeditations of genius; the people, valet of great lords, and in its abjection loving the sole image in this crumbling society that represents to it authority, charity, fruitfulness," — of such a people his *Ruy Blas is to* be the type and symbol.

This promises much; but the briefest sketch of the story will show to every attentive reader[1] the most complete lack of intelligence, of truth and life. The plot is farcical, and the attempt to build a tragic action on it lacks common-sense. "The Greeks and Turks are nearer to us, both by their acts and sentiments, than the Spaniards or the French of Victor Hugo." And yet there is in "Ruy Blas" a superb poetic evocation of a decaying monarchy, and the monologue of the lackey prime-minister on the glories of Charles V. is a piece of declamation worthy to rank with that of Charles himself at the tomb of Charlemagne. But these admirable passages would be as appropriate in "Les Châtiments" or "La Légende des siècles" as in this drama, and when we disengage the story itself from its poetic adornments, we find ourselves in a maze of puerilities which it is quite unnecessary to unravel here.

The truly fantastic morality of a play where a lackey loves a queen and wins the pardon of his presumption by poisoning himself, will more than counterbalance in sober minds its superb eloquence. Yet it would be unjust to say with Vinet that "Ruy Blas is a jest, a parody, with no idea, no inspiration, and no interest." On the contrary, in the first act there is more skill of dramatic structure than Hugo had ever shown, and the action is set in motion with remarkable celerity and deftness. The second act does indeed fail to fulfil this dramatic promise, but it gives us an exquisite idyl of passion roused in a neglected heart by the mystery of an unknown lover. In the third act the absurdity of the climax is redeemed by most eloquent declamation. The fourth act the critic may indeed feel constrained to abandon as a dramaturgical error. Hugo

[1] Cp. Lanson, p. 959, who makes substantially the same statement.

intends a farcical interlude, but his wit is too elephantine in its gambols. But in the fifth act one's impatience at the sentimentality of the lackey and the queen is mollified by lyric passages of great pathos and lines of true Corneillian force; the outpourings of a genius that, whatever the form of its expression — song, drama, novel, or essay — was always lyric in its essence. Thus regarded, "Ruy Blas" is the best of Hugo's dramas.

It remains to speak of "Les Burgraves," which closes the brief course of the Romantic theatre. Hugo may have grown weary, after "Ruy Blas," of forcing his genius into this uncongenial channel; for five years separate these plays, during which he published a volume of verse and an account of a journey to Germany in his peculiar lyric vein. This journey furnished the scene and in some measure the inspiration of "Les Burgraves." It does not add to the eagerness with which the reader essays this drama of four generations to be told in an oracular preface that it is "a philosophic abstraction . . . the palpitating and complete symbol of expiation;" nor is there much hope of dramatic unity in a work that is proclaimed to be "laughter and tears, good and evil, high and low, fatality, providence, genius, chance, society, the world, nature, life," above all which, the confident author continues, "you feel that something grand is soaring." He proposes to give a complete picture of the German middle ages as his fancy conjures it before him. "History, legend, tale, reality, nature, the family, love, naïve manners, savage faces, princes, soldiers, adventurers, kings, patriarchs as in the Bible, hunters of men as in Homer, Titans as in Æschylus, crowded all at once on the dazzled imagination of the author," who seems to seek to reconvey to the spectator his own *mental* confusion.

To trace the chain of sensational effects by which this forlorn hope of the Romantic drama sought to galvanize the interest of a weary public would be alike tedious and unprofitable. One is shown a stolen child, a son who just misses being a parricide, a girl in a trance as in "Angelo," coffins on the stage as in "Lucrezia;" there is a cavern, too, and an imperial ghost to stay the murderous hand and unite the lovers. No wonder such a play achieved an utter fiasco. When characters announce to the audience "I am murder and vengeance," we have passed from the reform to the second childhood of the drama.

Hugo's epic conception was grandiose, but it was irreconcilable with the limitations of the dramatic *genre*. To these fundamental limitations Hugo refused to conform. He was no longer content to mingle the tragic and the comic; he injected into the drama history, philosophy, the epic, and the lyric; and to make his dramatic action carry such foreign elements, he was forced to stimulate it by sensational tricks in constantly increasing measure, until Pegasus sank under the burden and the dosing. But if the drama could not carry such burdens, he had no further use for it. He would not seek an audience that had abandoned him for the timid classical revival of Ponsard's School of Good Sense. Indeed, it was not in the drama alone that Romanticism as a dogmatic theory of literature was bankrupt. As Nanteuil told Hugo, "There were no more young men," in 1843, such as had made the success of "Hernani" in 1830; and so the poet was led for a time from literature to politics, from which ten years later he returned to letters, another and a far stronger man. But before we follow him there, somewhat must be said of his work in lyric poetry and prose fiction during this his *essentially dramatic period*.

The year that followed "Hernani" was made illustrious by "Notre-Dame" and by "Les Feuilles d'automne." The lyrics of the latter volume equalled any that Hugo had yet written, and were not soon surpassed. "Notre-Dame" is an historical novel, less erudite perhaps than "Cinq-Mars," but more poetically vivid, having indeed a "Gothic intensity of pathos," though the reader will hardly find in it that "Grecian perfection of structure" which Mr. Swinburne admires. The student may pick many a flaw in his picture of Paris in the days of Louis XI., and still more in his description of mediæval society; but he will not with all his documents, even if he be a Michelet, produce facts that will efface in our minds the outlines of Hugo's fancy, or make the Paris of 1482 other to us than the Paris of Esmeralda.

The plot is of the slightest. Esmeralda, the fair gypsy, is loved by a priest fiercely, by a soldier gayly, by a hunchback monster passionately, and is finally executed as a sorceress through the unwitting intervention of her own mother, — Hugo's favorite situation. But far more living than any of these people is the cathedral itself, ever present as a symbol of the society over which it broods.[1] Very vivid also are the picturesque crowds and the vagabond life of the Cour des Miracles, with its nimble cripples and clairvoyant blind, its polyglot language, strange customs, and weird superstitions, that give us the illusion of Naturalism itself.

While therefore as a novel "Notre-Dame" is of the slightest, it is a marvel of reproductive imagination. By far the best parts are those in which the author abandons wholly and frankly the thread of his narra-

[1] This symbolical use of inanimate objects is frequently employed with great effect by Zola and Ibsen, and latterly by Daudet.

tive to tell of ancient Paris, of the cathedral, of the wily and perverse Louis XI., of the ancient law courts, or of the relations of mediæval architecture to the invention of printing.[1] He declared that to inspire the people with a love of their national monuments was "one of the chief ends of his book and indeed of his life." And his wish was in so far fulfilled that a more intelligent care for historic buildings and monuments dates from the Romantic movement; and to this nothing contributed more than "Notre-Dame," where the studies of an enthusiastic lover of the past were vivified by a style that if it had been learned from Chateaubriand was none the less Hugo's peculiar possession. This was the only important prose work of the early period, however; for "Claude Gueux," which followed in 1835, was but an eddy in his literary productivity. It repeated the Quixotic protest against capital punishment begun by the "Dernier jour d'un condamné" (1828), a bit of intense imagination much praised in its day, and repeated at intervals in and out of season through his whole life.

The "Feuilles d'automne," as is natural in a developing poetic genius, showed more care to avoid the faults and excesses of earlier work than to strike out into untried paths. But the public had advanced toward his æsthetic position; and so the new volume found a wider and readier acceptance than any that had gone before, though, when it is regarded from the summit of his poetic achievement, it seems to mark progress only in a fuller mastery of metre. Neither the lights nor the shadows are as strong here as formerly; and it is precisely in this chiaroscuro that Hugo excels, as he showed in the "Orientales." The

[1] Books iii. 1, 2; v. 2; vi. 1; x. 5.

more domestic subjects of the "Autumn Leaves," the sentiments and aspirations of the fireside, are much less favorable to his genius. But if the collection is disappointing in itself, it bears several marks of promise in the broadening of the poet's mind. Here, first, in "Dédain" he adds to his lyre "the brazen cord" that was to ring so nobly in the poetry of his exile. Here, too, can be traced, in "La Prière pour tous," the instinct of universal sympathy that circles the miseries of the world, foreshadowing "Les Misérables" and the later romances. This sympathy seems sometimes to extend beyond mankind into a pantheistic aspiration to "mingle his whole soul with creation," as though the poet would make his inner world of throbbing images and feelings fruitful by contact with all external nature.

Four years occupied with dramatic and critical work separate the "Autumn Leaves" from the "Twilight Songs," the most varied of all Hugo's lyric volumes. Here light, social, occasional pieces obscure poems of the highest order on which the reader comes quite unawares and unprepared, so that repeated reading and close observation alone will prevent some grain escaping with the chaff. Many of these verses are surely anterior to the "Orientales," and some seem to belong to his "follies before he was born." Several bear an elegiac imprint, and show a tendency to mystic adoration that he certainly did not feel in 1835, for at no time before his exile had he been so aggressively bitter and morosely pessimistic as then,[1] and bitterness and pessimism are the dominant notes of what is new in the "Chants du crépuscule." They are the source of those regrets of vanished youth, of the time when his "thoughts, like a swarm of bees, flew upward

[1] Cp. Dupuy: V. Hugo, p. 87 (Classiques populaires).

toward the sun . . . when pride, joy, ecstasy, like pure wine from a rich vase, overflowed from my seventeen years." Then his mind was free, he says; but now he is "torn with rage" at critics who "outrage him in all his work," and at the censorship, "that bitch with low forehead that skulks behind all power, vile, crunching ever in her filthy jaws some fragment of thy starry robe, O Muse!" [1] Already the follies of the Orleanists are beginning to rouse in him the revolutionary liberal, with enough of the poet mingled with the democrat to make him prefer to the piping peace of Louis Philippe the glorious labors of Napoleon, whom distance is already beginning to crown with a luminous halo of legend. This mental state explains why Hugo's satire has now become more frequent and threatening; and the conviction that the civilization of the small minority is bought with the suffering of the mass of mankind has given to his universal sympathy a socialistic coloring.

Yet for several years these germs remained quiescent. The "Inner Voices," his next volume of verse, has little that is satiric, socialistic, or political. It marks rather a deepening of that communion with

[1] Et comme un vif essaim d'abeilles,
Mes pensées volaient au soleil . . .
Où l'orgeuil, la joie et l'extase,
Comme un vin pur, d'un riche vase,
Débordaient de mes dix-sept ans . . .
Moi qui déchire tant de rage . . .
Quelque bouche flétrie
Dans tous mes ouvrages m'outragea.
(À Mlle J., lines 41–42, 17–19, 7, 109–11.)

Cette chienne au front bas qui suit tous les pouvoirs,
Vile, et mâchant toujours dans sa gueule souillée,
O muse! quelque pan de ta robe étoilée.
(À Alphonse Rabbe, at the close.)

Nature that could be traced in the "Autumn Leaves." Here is his first song of the sea, which no French poet has loved and rendered as he has done. Here, too, is that striking picture of Nature as a nursing mother, symbolized in "La Vache." Even where we might listen for the "brazen cord," as in "Sunt Lachrymæ Rerum" or "À l'Arc de Triomphe" we catch rather an elegiac than a Pindaric strain. And yet one must go back to the "Orientales" to find such vigor and grace of language, such pregnant and picturesque lines as are set like jewels in some of these descriptive lyrics.

One more volume, "Sunbeams and Shadows," completes the poetic output of the first period. Though published after the German journey, it bears little trace of a changed temper or broadened mind. Here, even more than in the "Inner Voices," one finds self-restraint, delicacy of touch, less of the thunder, more of the murmuring brook and whispering breeze.[1] The satire, too, is dominated by the generous warmth of universal sympathy, a little shallow in its breadth, that was to give the key-note to his political activity in the next decade. It was by this that his genius was diverted from the stage and the lyre to the tribune and to political agitation. The ten years from 1843 to 1853 are marked by no literary work of import. But when destiny, kind in its apparent harshness, sent Hugo into exile and so gave him back to literature, it was seen how essentially this experience had enriched and deepened his nature. Indeed, when he turned to politics, the best that was in him to give was not only ungiven but unsuspected and unrealized.

[1] The most striking pieces of this type are "Tristesse d'Olympio," "La Statue," the verses on Palestrina, and the account of his boyhood at the Feuillantines (Les Rayons et les ombres, nos. 34, 36, 35, 19).

CHAPTER VII.

HUGO IN EXILE AND IN TRIUMPH.

THE decade that separates "Les Burgraves" from "Les Châtiments" marks a vital change in the mind of Victor Hugo and in the character of his work. Even the most superficial examination of the kind and amount of his production makes this obvious. In the first fifty years of his life drama takes the first place, there is more poetry than fiction, and nearly a quarter of the whole bulk is made up of miscellaneous travels, memoirs, and essays. In the second period fiction advances to the first place; poetry is immediately behind, and is closely followed by political satires and pamphlets, which are hardly literature in the highest sense, though they often contain pages of the greatest eloquence. Essays and the drama count but one volume each. The lyric was now recognized as the best field for the display of his powers, and even in the prose fiction it takes a much larger place than in "Notre-Dame" or "Bug-Jargal."[1]

In all departments the work of the second period shows a new strength and earnestness. The causes of this added depth and force are to be sought in his

[1] The "édition définitive," from which all citations are here made, counts seventy volumes, including the autobiographical "V. Hugo raconté." Of these twenty-six are prior, thirty-four posterior, to 1852. Poetry counts, respectively, six and fourteen volumes; fiction, five and fifteen; drama, nine and one; political prose, two and ten; miscellaneous prose, four and four.

domestic and political experiences. The death of his daughter Léopoldine, drowned with her young husband at Villequier in 1843, was the first great sorrow of his life, and left an impression as enduring and as fruitful as the loss of Hallam on Tennyson. It was perhaps to escape from these sorrowful meditations that he sought distraction in the struggles of the political arena, to which his untrained but generous mind was attracted by the socialism of Proudhon and Fourier, who had roused in the substratum of French thought a vague but intense enthusiasm that was presently to find expression in the Revolution of 1848. From 1835 one can trace an increasing democratic tendency in Hugo's writing. His interest in politics grows yearly more active; and when he is received into the Academy in 1841, his inaugural address is political rather than literary. That Louis Philippe made him a peer in 1845 did not change his sympathies, and the Revolutionists promptly elected him a member of their Constituent Assembly in 1848.

One cannot view Hugo's career as a practical politician with much satisfaction, though the Revolution was not so fatal to him as to Lamartine. At first, power or the presage of danger that lay in the incongruous composition of the Assembly itself caused in him a conservative reaction. He favored Louis Napoleon, and opposed all the economic schemes of the radicals, though he refused to sanction political prosecutions and pleaded eloquently for the abolition of the death penalty. Yet in the next year the caressing flattery of Girardin dexterously converted him into a radical orator and journalist, most vehement to adore what he had burned and burn what he had adored. But his bitter and eloquent attacks on Napoleon and Mon-

talembert could be tellingly answered by quotations from his own speeches; and this made him distrusted by his new allies, while he seemed grieved at their suspicion, and quite unconscious of the deviousness of his course.[1]

Thus the *coup d'état* of 1851 was a moral good fortune for Hugo. It saved him from himself, and made of one who seemed a political turn-coat and visionary a martyr and a hero whose voice penetrated from his island exile into every corner of France. His "Histoire d'un crime" is an eloquent account of those stirring days, but it shows how his efforts to organize resistance to the usurped authority of the false Bonaparte were distrusted by his fellow Republicans. He fled to Brussels, whence the Belgian government soon invited him to move to the more hospitable protection of England. He took up his residence as near France as possible, in the Channel Islands, — first in Jersey, then, at the suggestion of the English government, in Guernsey, till the collapse of the Second Empire at Sedan brought him back to his country to share the darkest days of the young Republic's "Terrible Year." He had consistently scorned every offer of amnesty from the successful adventurer whose perjury he had branded, and he remained to the last true to the ringing words of his early exile: "Though but one remain unreconciled, that one shall be I."[2]

These years of exile steeled his mind to greater hardness. The temper of his arms was first revealed by the presence of a powerful and despised enemy. His patriotism found new fire in his country's shame. Already in 1852 he had given a foretaste of his mor-

[1] See Biré, V. Hugo après 1830, ii. 116–204.

[2] Et s'il n'en reste qu'un, je serai celui-là. (Les Châtiments, p. 349.)

dant wrath both in justifying a joint appeal to insurrection that had been issued by the radical leaders, and in the pamphlet "Napoléon le petit," whose scurrilousness is excused both by its vigor and its subject. But these paled before "Les Châtiments," in which the lyric unites with the satiric to produce a classic that will long survive the Empire that evoked it.

This book, like "Napoléon le petit," enjoyed the advertisement of police prohibition during the whole imperial period, and no doubt contributed materially to nurse the spirit that brought the Second Empire to the disaster that justified the poet's severity. But exile gave him calmer hours also, and to these we owe the "Contemplations," a collection of lyrics similar to "Les Rayons et les ombres," but closing in a nobler strain; while a little later, in 1857, Hugo is able to show, in his first "Legend of the Centuries," the high-water mark of his achievement in the lyrical epic. Then, in 1862, the long-expected romance "Les Misérables" justified the intent expectation of ten nations,—for nine translations appeared on the same day as the original, an event unparalleled till then in the annals of fiction. This interest was judiciously whetted in 1863 by the unavowed autobiography, and in 1864 he essayed once more what he called literary criticism in "William Shakespeare," an introduction to a translation of the English poet, and, as was to be anticipated, much more visionary and oracular than logical or precise.

Then follows the Indian summer of Hugo's muse, his "Chansons des rues et des bois," to be succeeded by another social and pseudo-philosophic novel, "The Toilers of the Sea." He was now so unquestionably the foremost of French writers that the Empire could not well get along without him, and visitors to the

Paris Exposition of 1867 found the Guide to that pageant provided with a preface by the distinguished exile. So these last years of banishment were less a grief than a balm to his *amour propre*. His steadfast attitude won sympathy for his literary work. The success of "Hernani" on its revival in 1867 was certainly beyond its dramatic desert, and that of "Lucrezia Borgia" in 1870 is unquestionably to be attributed to personal esteem, for only a year before the same public had received with unwonted coldness his fantastic novel, "L'Homme qui rit."

As the Empire tottered to its fall, Hugo's interest in politics became more absorbing. His two sons joined with his son-in-law Vacquerie and the now notorious Rochefort to publish "Le Rappel," a radical journal. To this the exile frequently contributed, and so prepared for himself an enthusiastic reception in Paris whenever the inevitable revolution should invite his return. But 1870 revealed once more and almost immediately the hopelessly unpractical nature of his political ideas, by his appeal to the triumphant Germans to desert the men who had led them to victory, found a republic, and ally themselves to the French, whom they had always distrusted and now despised. Nor was Hugo satisfied with this sky-rocket. In February, 1871, the electors of Paris had chosen him by a great majority to be their delegate to the National Assembly; but here the violence of his speeches against the inevitable peace roused that body to such a pitch of impatience that in March he shook its dust from his feet.

A few days later he lost a son and brought the body to Paris, just as the Commune was achieving its first success. He remained here long enough to protest against the destruction of the Vendôme Column,

to which it will be remembered he had dedicated two odes. Then he made his way a second time to Brussels, and was a second time invited by the government to leave it, barely escaping the violence of a Belgian mob for his defiance of international law. He went to Luxemburg, and later to Paris, where he failed signally in the elections of 1872, perhaps because his experience of the Communists had made him more conservative, perhaps because their experience of him had made the electors of Paris more cautious.

But if he might not be the chosen tribune, he was already the poet-laureate of the Third Republic. A hundred thousand copies of "Les Châtiments" were sold within a year, it was publicly read in the theatres, and several of his plays, notably "Ruy Blas," were revived with much success. In his new capacity he now put forth "L'Année terrible," a national and patriotic volume that made a French critic exclaim with just pride that Germany had no such poet to sing her victory as France to glorify even her disaster. He followed this with a romance of the first Revolution, "Quatre-vingt-treize," which, like "Les Misérables," appeared simultaneously in ten languages, though it did not gain the success of that work. But this was due more to the evolution of public taste than to any falling off in the powers of the author, who now turned to collecting his political memoirs and to a persistent campaign of letters and addresses that eventually secured his election to the Senate, though only by a narrow majority and on a second ballot. In this capacity the old man of seventy-four distinguished himself by zealously advocating a scheme for general amnesty, then so impracticable that it secured but six votes. But in 1877 he was able to do his country a

real service by holding up before the conspirators of the Sixteenth of May his "History of a Crime" by which France had been betrayed in 1851.

Meantime the second, though inferior, part of the "Legend of the Centuries" showed him still the greatest poet of France, and in "L'Art d'être grandpère" he touched the chords of domestic pathos almost as artlessly as in the "Contemplations." But not content with these multiplied titles to literary renown nor heeding the warning of the years, he published a series of so-called "Philosophic Poems,"[1] followed these with the two volumes of "Les Quatre vents de l'esprit" and "Torquemada," while he left unpublished other dramas and poems that have sufficed to fill several volumes.

He died in 1885, in the season of roses, as he had foretold.[2] His great age, reaching out into a new generation from an epoch that had passed away, could not but impress the popular imagination, the more as his talent, his presence, and his personal physique had in them something of the monumental and grandiose, so that his death stirred a wave of popular sympathy such as perhaps has been the lot of no writer since literature began. His body was exposed in state beneath the Arc de Triomphe. Thronging thousands gathered around it, and made his funeral a pageant that royalty might envy and could not parallel. The Panthéon, that French temple of fame, was abandoned by the patron saint of Paris to make room for its popular hero.[3]

[1] Le Pape, La Pitié suprême, Les Religions et la religion, L'Âne (1878–1880).

[2] L'Année terrible, Janvier, i.

[3] Hugo died without the sacraments of the church. The clergy therefore protested against his burial in the vaults of a consecrated building, and, when the protest was unheeded, abandoned it, not for the first time, to secular uses.

This chronological review of Hugo's work may serve as an introduction to a study of it in its categories, from which alone one can estimate the poet's place or the nature and limitations of his genius. Here we may dismiss immediately the political speeches and pamphlets, for all their eloquence and bitterness is distilled and refined in the wormwood of "Les Châtiments;" nor need allusion be made to memoirs and letters, for these belong rather to biography than to literature. Fiction and poetry remain. By his novels Hugo is best, and often solely, known among us; these, then, may introduce us to the works that make him one of the greatest lyric poets of the world.

The generation that separated "Les Misérables" from "Notre-Dame" had, as we have seen, radically changed Hugo's sociology and politics. So while "Notre-Dame" was above all an evocation of the past, "Les Misérables" reveals the author with his eyes on the present and his heart in the future. "So long," he says in his preface, "as there shall exist through the fault of our laws and customs a social condemnation that creates artificial hells in the midst of our civilization and complicates a divine destiny by human fatalism; so long as the three problems of the century — the degradation of man by the proletariat, the fall of woman by hunger, the arrested development of the child by ignorance — are not solved; so long as social asphyxia is possible in any place, — in other words and from a wider point of view, so long as there shall be on earth ignorance and misery, books like this cannot be useless."

It may be doubted, however, whether Hugo has made an important contribution to the banishment of ignorance and misery from the world by this series of scenes loosely strung together by their connection

with the convict, manufacturer, and philanthropist, Jean Valjean, and relieved, like "Notre-Dame," by digressions and lay-sermons that hamper the narrative but best reward the reader. Into the details of this narrative it is unnecessary to our purpose to enter. The strength of the work lies not in its romantic nor in its psychological interest, though there is power and truth in his analysis of the veil of ostracism that separates the convict from his fellows and almost forces him to crime; and individual scenes, such as Valjean's escape from Thernadier, the defence of the barricade, and the flight through the sewers, are executed with great vigor, while parts of the description of the battle of Waterloo reveal the poetic imagination of Hugo in all its glory.

The ten volumes of this vast romance lack continuity and proportion. If the work is regarded as a whole, Flaubert may be right in denying it either truth or grandeur; and in parts the style is, as he says, "intentionally incorrect and vulgar." As in the dramas, the contrasts are sharp in subject, scene, and style, and the story is but a thread on which Hugo strings his many-colored beads. Antiquarian lore, political reminiscences, social vaticinations, realistic "slumming," with dialectic studies that show much curious observation, interrupt the narrative, which is itself half philosophic and half idyllic. The whole is a chaos of glowing eloquence, deep emotion, weary stretches of commonplace, and a few treacherous quicksands of bathos that reveal a cyclopean lack of humor. He takes for his philosophic background voluntary expiation and repentance that produce a moral regeneration by the revelation of a higher life. Such a background admirably sets off humanitarian pleas, and democratic if

not socialistic sentiments; for it is sentiment rather than reason with Hugo that makes the poor and oppressed seem right, and the dominant and rich wrong. This emotional tone unites with directly autobiographical portions and a subjective style to give the whole a lyric character. The psychology is not based on observation, nor correlated with the actual conditions of life. Valjean is a Utopian who shows neither wisdom nor prudence. We feel that his visionary magnanimity would be neither natural nor profitable in life, and it threatens to be wearisome even in romance. But the minor characters show still more of that inevitable tendency of subjective fiction to the symbol and the type that we have noted already in Hugo's earlier drama and fiction. Enjolras poses persistently as the apostle and martyr of uncompromising democracy, Javert is at once more and less than human in his reverence for constituted authority, and the grisette Fantine is declared to be the symbol of joy and modesty, "innocence floating on error," and "still preserving the shade that separates Psyche from Venus." Marius is Hugo's youthful self, a type of young energy nursing democratic aspirations on imperial memories. But all of these together have not the life of the charming little gamin Gavroche, the classical study of the Paris street-boy; for into this character Hugo put his poet's heart, and the touch of sympathy that makes the world kin. This and the epic descriptions familiar to every lover of French literature will carry "Les Misérables" through many generations of readers and revolutions of popular taste, although even in the year of its appearance Hugo's novel was of a type of fiction already discredited. Here, as throughout his second period, he barred the

current of a literary evolution that he did not avert or deflect.[1]

The epic and lyric elements in Hugo's fiction are even more strongly marked in "The Toilers of the Sea," inspired by the poet's life at Guernsey and his intimate daily contact with "the men who go down to the sea in ships and know the mystery of the great waters." An oracular preface tells us that Religion, Society, and Nature are the three struggles of mankind and also its three needs. "A triple necessity weighs on us, of dogmas, laws, and things." Former romances had dealt with the first and second; this should show how the fatality of things "is mingled with the supreme fatality, the human heart." But these high-sounding phrases must not be taken too literally; for indeed the cause of all the tragic catastrophe is the heroine's lack of common honesty and the hero's lack of common-sense. Gilliat's emotions are as deep as the ocean. Deruchette is as treacherous and coquettish as the sea. But, once more, what we enjoy is not the psychology of character nor the story, but the long description of the perilous and solitary quest of Gilliat on the Douvres, where throughout prose has suffered a sea-change, and throbs and thrills with the far-resounding waves. Yet, as a whole, "The Toilers of the Sea" is inferior both in power and in interest to "Les Misérables" and to "Notre-Dame." The imagination may be more grandiose, but the subject is more petty. Hugo needs either a wider canvas or an historical perspective. The latter he provided for his next novel, "L'Homme qui rit;" but he saw fit, with strange perversity, to import into the English court of Elizabeth the extravagances of "Han d'Islande," and

[1] The metaphor is Brunetière's.

even the unparalleled efforts of his publishers could not avert its rejection by a public now in the full-blooded confidence of the Naturalistic spring.

The busy times of republican reconstruction were hardly passed, however, before Hugo, piqued by this check, returned to historical fiction. Taught by experience or guided by instinct, he now chose the period suited of all others to his genius and environment, and gave to the world in "Ninety-three" one of the most remarkable historical evocations of French literature. The time is the crucial year of the First Republic; the scene, the civil war in Vendée, to which Hugo was attracted both by his nature and nurture, for his parents united the blood of the contending factions. In this novel one notes indeed the growing mannerisms of old age, with the unevenness of style and looseness of construction common to all of Hugo's novels, but one finds also more intensity of action, more real palpitating life, and a truer tragic catastrophe than in any of his earlier romances. The Vendéan hero Lantenac is not too heroic for a Breton noble, nor is his nephew Gauvin too sentimental for a Republican of the "Feast of Pikes." The unique epoch justified and demanded a more than human heroism and magnanimity. In Cimourdain, to be sure, one recognizes with no special pleasure the Javert of "Les Misérables," the uncompromising pursuer of an ideal, — in this case the incarnate Republic, — who, like his prototype, ends his life by suicide, as if to teach that a life of law without sentiment seems to the Romantic mind impossible and self-destructive.

But, as before, in "Ninety-three," what leaves the freshest impress on the mind are the minor characters

and incidents, — the peasant woman with her three children that run like a golden thread through these scenes of fire and blood; the delightful old trooper, Radoub; pictures of political Paris suggesting the magic-lantern slides of Carlyle. The weird procession of the guillotine, the cannon aboard ship broken loose and spreading terror and destruction, the sieges of Dol and of La Torgue, take here the place of the fight with the devil-fish in the "Toilers," and of Waterloo and the Barricade in "Les Misérables;" and the climax, in spite of some rather rank flowers of rhetoric, is unusually effective and affecting. Indeed, "Ninety-three" is Hugo's best novel, though its place in literature is less unique and probably lower than that of "Notre-Dame" or of the redemption of Jean Valjean.

But it is time to leave these lower walks and ascend to the heights of Hugo's genius. For in his poetry this second period is much more than a convenient division; it marks a distinctly new manner. Romantic it is still, but now rather in the nobler form of an idealist's protest against the cloud of skepticism in the mind and weariness in the will that characterized the Second Empire. So "Les Châtiments" of 1853 are as different from "Les Rayons et les ombres" of 1840 as tempered steel is from polished iron. His political experience, followed by the enforced calm and the bitter indignation of exile, gave his verses from this time an intensity of conviction that seems sometimes to echo the earnestness of a Hebrew prophet. While Gautier sought excuse and forgetfulness in his doctrine of art for art, and taught that impersonality was essential to the highest reaches of poetry, these "Scourgings," throbbing and aglow with passion, anger,

hatred, but burning too with a lofty and trustful patriotism, raised the protest of their ringing halt to the surrender of the noblest prerogative of literature. But it was only in exile that such lyrics were possible, only in exile that French thought was free. "Les Châtiments," printed in Belgium and smuggled across the frontier in countless incorrect and garbled editions, concealed sometimes, it is said, in plaster casts of the emperor they scourged, aroused a fearful joy in countless readers. But among the poets of France the currents of development, though divergent, were away from Hugo. Here, too, he barred but did not deflect the course of lyric evolution.

Nearly all the satires of "Les Châtiments" were written between December, 1851, and the end of the next year; a few are anterior to that date, a very few are a little later. Evidently he "sang because he must;" his wrath was absolutely sincere. And yet critics have not failed to observe that he had rather less reason than others had to feel it. He had contributed as much as any man save Béranger to the revival of the Napoleonic legend; and when De Vigny and Lamartine had tried to stem the tide whose consequences they foresaw, his second ode to the Vendôme Column had sought to cover them with contempt. He had actually printed a special cheap and popular edition of his Bonapartist odes, in which he talks about regilding the altar of Napoleon's memory, by whose death France is left a widow. Nor had he been wholly unwilling to co-operate with Louis himself, until he found Louis unwilling to co-operate with him by rewarding his efforts with a cabinet position.[1] But Hugo had a happy faculty of forgetting

[1] Cp. Biré, op. cit. ii. 192.

his inconsistencies; and whatever part disappointed ambition may have had in his change of political position, he was unflinching in his new convictions, and so sincere in his belief in himself that he hardly realized that he was exposing his own conduct to invidious criticism by his reckless denunciation of the supporters of the Empire.

One other small reserve must be made before we can wholly praise "Les Châtiments." In his violent emotion Hugo sometimes falls into strange errors of taste, and mistakes incoherent excitement for eloquent emphasis. Then, too, the uninformed reader will suspect what the well-informed reader knows, that his denunciation is sometimes unjust or merely vituperative; and this, even more than exaggeration, is fatal to satiric effect. Several pieces and many lines of this sort mar Hugo's "Scourgings,"[1] the more because of their general high range of excellence; for, as Mr. Swinburne has said,[2] these ninety-eight poems between the prologue "Nox" and the epilogue "Lux" roll and break and lighten and thunder like the waves of a visible sea, and execute their chorus of rising and descending harmonies with almost as much depth, variety, and musical force, with as much power, life, and passionate unity, as the breakers on the shores where they were written.

[1] See, for instance "Un Autre" (p. 169), where Hugo calls the talented journalist Veuillot "a hypocritic Zoïlus" whose mother was a Javotte and whose father was the devil. He even has the astonishingly bad taste to mock him for the poverty of his student years. It is natural to compare these verses, as Brunetière has done (Poésie lyrique, ii. 81), with Voltaire's on Fréron in "Le Pauvre diable" and "La Capitolade." On the causes and justice of Hugo's wrath, see Biré, especially op. cit. ii. 192, and "V. Hugo après 1852," pp. 42–55.

[2] Op. cit., p. 56.

The clauses of the proclamation in which Napoleon announced the success of his *coup d'état* furnish the external division of the satires; and the pieces are ordered with great skill, so that they will bear connected reading without monotony. The most pathetic and elegiac poems alternate with the noblest verses that wrath could inspire. What can be more touching than the grandmother's lament over the body of the little child killed by the volleys of that fatal Fourth of December (p. 81)? What more exquisite than the simple story of the exile and death of Pauline Roland (p. 27), or the songs of the banished and of those they left behind them (pp. 64, 209)? What more beautiful than the calm repose of his "Dawn" at Jersey (p. 175), or what more strong in its epic simplicity than the opening lines of "Expiation" (p. 223), surely the finest piece in this rich treasury, with its terrible picture of the retreat from Moscow, through which runs like a shiver the refrain: "It snowed, It snowed"? What more intense than the lines on Waterloo that follow, and what more galling than their bitter conclusion that the only adequate expiation for Napoleon I. is the contemplation of Napoleon III.? What more stinging verses were ever penned than that other contrast between the great and the little Napoleon (p. 311), where each strophe hisses with added contempt its refrain "Petit, Petit"? What more grewsome than the picture of the half-buried victims of the street-massacre (p. 37), or than his call to the people to rise, like Lazarus from his tomb (p. 77); or, finally, what more noble than his appeal to God to strengthen his hand for vengeance (p. 101), and to the oppressed to be moderate in their destined triumph: "Let Cain pass by, he belongs to God" (pp. 151, 156)? How

stirring is his patriotic appeal to the flags of the first Empire! What calm consolation, what confidence in the ineffable love of the all-upholding arms, breathes in "Stella" (p. 283)! And, finally, where in Hugo, or in all French verse, shall we find such a rush and sweep of contemptuous scorn as in "La Reculade" (p. 295)?

These lyrics have frequently an epic element, and in a few pieces the satire takes a dramatic form.[1] Here, with the bold personification of a mediæval miracle-play, the Cellars of Lille, the Garrets of Rouen, the Prison Ships, a Tomb, Justice, Reason, Honor, and the Marseillaise stamp in laconic epigrams their condemnation of Napoleon, and Conscience teaches Harmodius that "he may kill that man with tranquillity." Noteworthy, too, is the consolation that the exile sought and found in increasing measure in nature and in the sea, whose mysterious fascination grew on him from the drowning of his daughter, in 1843, till it reached its climatic expression in "The Toilers of the Sea." Especially does one note this temper in the closing section of "Les Châtiments;" for in "Lux" all vituperation, denunciation, and bitterness are laid aside in a grand vision of peace on earth and good-will, where God shall take the rope of the alarm bell and bind with it the thoughts of men in an eternal sheaf, where each shall labor for all, and all rejoice in the work of each. Eternal hope conquers all doubt with its certainty and all vengeance in its magnanimity.

This serener temper inspires also "Les Contemplations" with a peculiar charm that makes this collection, or at least its latter division, the noblest purely lyric poetry in French. The earlier part contains

[1] Pages 69, 73, 147, 195 of the 16mo edition.

only verses written prior to 1843, which might have been mentioned in connection with "Les Rayons et les ombres" had there been any particular necessity of discussing them at all, save in their contrast to the maturer poems of the later manner. The second volume of the "Contemplations" opens with "Paucæ Meæ," memorial verses to Léopoldine, among which are the best of Hugo's elegies.[1] But only one poem of this group rises above the kind of excellence that was to be found in the poems of 1840; and this, "Les Deux cavaliers," [2] is an exception that proves the rule, for it was written in 1853. Here indeed, as Brunetière points out, the poet begins to seek his effects less in clearness of design and high relief of form than in the mingling play of light and shade, in the science of chiaroscuro. "He tries to thicken the shadow, to flash light on it, and then to let it sink again into its obscurity." And the manner here foreshadowed is characteristic of all the later poems, and is among the causes of their lyric pre-eminence.

The central subjects of the "Contemplations" of this island exile are, not unnaturally, death and the sea, both united in the domestic tragedy of Villequier. As might be expected, Hugo's notions of the future life are generously indefinite. He is sure that death is an unfolding of a fuller being, but that does not "unteach him to complain," as may be seen in the simple pathos of the lines addressed to his wife in 1855. In the main this reaching out into the unknown is confined to "Paucæ Meæ." In the last part the breath of the sea is more felt as daily contact with its moods impresses it on his thought; but

[1] For instance, "Trois ans après," "Veni, vidi, vici," "À Villequier."
[2] Book iv. no 12. Cp. Brunetière, Poésie lyrique, ii. 88–97.

while he sees in it the angry waste, the limitless gulf, the infinite sepulchre, yet this very aspect of ocean seems to have inspired Hugo, as it did Wordsworth, with that fortitude and patient cheer which gave him confidence in his genius and his mission, — one might be tempted to say, too great confidence, were it not that Hugo's estimate of himself anticipated that of posterity. He thought — and the mass of Frenchmen seem to agree with him — that the poet ought to be a shepherd of the people, a curate of souls, and he thought, too, that his ideal was fully realized in himself; so through these years of exile he grew more intent on the substance of his message, less meticulous as to its form. Thus his work, alike in form and substance, became more intensely individual, the veritable "memoirs of his soul." And we may imagine the seer's contempt for the disciples of formal correctness and polish. He would rather, he said, be "grotesquely useful" than a literary mandarin, and he condensed his scorn of such toying with the eternal verities into the words: "The vase that will not go to the fountain merits the hoots of the jugs."

In 1857 Hugo published two volumes of his "Legend of the Centuries," which were supplemented in 1877 and completed in 1883.[1] Then followed the "Chansons des rues et des bois," a true St. Martin's summer, a bursting of spring buds before the frosty but kindly winter of the poet's old age. There may be no genuine passion in these songs, any more perhaps than in the "Zuleika" of Goethe's "West-Östliche Divan;" but there is a joyous, naïve naturalism that in spite of occasional lapses of taste is not with-

[1] As the poems of the three publications are redistributed in the complete edition, it is more convenient to treat them together later.

out a curious charm. The metrical movement, too, is wonderfully free and unrestrained. The poet seems to renew his youth, and pipes as the linnets sing, with easy sylvan familiarity and country good-humor, in idyls whose simplicity is marred but rarely by overloaded fancy or obtrusive learning. Almost perfect in this kind is the "Country Holiday near Paris,"[1] with its faintly suggested historical background and the bustling city left behind. In the "Contemplations" the poet's homage to Nature had been deep; here it is gentle, elegiac. He watches the sower at dusk, and "feels what must be his faith in the useful flight of time."[2] More than once this sympathy with the natural instincts and purely physical life of man wakens in him an echo of the French Renaissance, and we seem to be listening to Ronsard.

Seven years separate these "Songs of Wayside and Wood" from "L'Année terrible," but they are separated by more than time; for just as his exile had stirred his genius to profounder depths between 1852 and 1859 than were sounded in the next ten years, so the terrible months of his country's disaster (from Sedan, in September, 1870, to the fiery destruction of the Commune in May, 1871, and the poet's brief flight to Belgium), the daily memento of defeat in the presence of the insolent conquerors, the humiliation of borrowing money abroad to buy liberty at home,—all these things roused in Hugo emotions as intense as those of 1852, and rekindled the wonted fires beneath his seventy years.

But if Hugo had been bitter in his denunciation of the triumphant emperor, he scorned, with a noble though perhaps a somewhat histrionic magnanimity, to

[1] Chansons, I. iv. 2. [2] Ib., II. i. 3.

insult him in defeat. No partisan alloy should mar the true ring of his patriotism. His book is a diary, reflecting day by day the anguish and the anger of his heart at the national humiliation and the fraternal strife. He remembers whose son he is, that the plaything of his infancy was the acorn of a sword-hilt. If he describes with terrible ghastly vividness the deserted battlefields where the dead lie in pools of blood, writhed in distorted forms beneath the snow, yet he has more envy than pity for those whom fate permits to die for their country and not to survive its defeat.[1] With true patriotic instinct, in spite of all the past eighteen years, he sees in Germany the spirit of reaction in jealous combat with the spirit of progress and enlightenment, which it now seems to the author of the "Scourgings" that France has never ceased to represent. He wishes he were not French, that he might choose to be so now.[2] Darkness and evil have indeed achieved a transitory triumph, but he is confident in the victory of the vanquished, — the ultimate conquest of matter by the ideal, of force by

[1] Ils gisent dans le champ terrible et solitaire,
Leur sang fait une mare affreuse sur la terre,
Les vautours monstrueux fouillent leur ventre ouvert;
Leurs corps farouches, froids, épars sur le pré vert,
Effroyables, tordus, noirs, ont toutes les formes
Que le tonnerre donne aux foudroyés énormes
. . . . . .
Ils sont nus et sanglants sous le ciel pluvieux:
O morts pour mon pays, je suis votre envieux.
(L'Année terrible, Décembre, viii.)

[2] Je voudrais n'être pas français pour pouvoir dire
Que je te choisis, France, et que dans ton martyre,
Je te proclame, toi que ronge le vautour,
Ma patrie et ma gloire et mon unique amour.
(Ib., Décembre, vii. Cp. also ix.)

reason. Just as a robin has built its nest in the mouth of the monumental lion of Waterloo, "peace in the horrible jaws of war," so this defeat shall not be ruin but genesis, France shall be a spark to kindle the German forest to a blaze that shall enlighten the world, and "trembling kings shall see liberty gush forth from the lance-thrust in her side."[1]

But into these political visions there comes, like the sound of a distant choir, a far-off echo of the domestic poems of the "Autumn Leaves;" for Jeanne, his little granddaughter (now Madame Léon Daudet), shares and cheers the weary months of the siege of Paris.[2] This contrast between the domestic and public life of the poet is managed with great effect, and the verses on the death of his son (Mars, iii., iv.) prepare the way for poems whose wide sympathy embraces even the errors of the Communists. "I cannot read," pleads an insurgent arrested in his attempt to burn the National Library. Hugo is sure that if we could penetrate beneath this Communistic rage, we should find its discords dissolving into the solemn chant, "Let us love one another." In the face of the orgies of burning Paris he still resists with all his power the "tragic widening of the tomb," he still pleads for the abolition of the death penalty.[3]

But if deep calls to deep from the "Châtiments" to the "Terrible Year," it is natural that this higher inspiration should be less lasting in the aged Hugo,

[1] Et la paix dans la gueule horrible de la guerre . . .
Est-ce un écroulement? Non. C'est une genèse . . .
. . . . . Du coup de lance à ton côté
Les rois tremblants verront jaillir la liberté.
(L'Année terrible, Juillet, iii., xi. 2, and xi. 1.)

[2] Ib., Septembre, v., Novembre, x., Janvier, xi., Juin, xviii.

[3] See Avril, v., vi., ix.; Juin, i., viii., xii., xiii.; Juillet, ii.

and indeed in his next volume it had quite spent its force. "L'Art d'être grand-père" is a continuation and development of the poems to Jeanne. Here, with childlike, not to say childish simplicity, he tells of "the sovereignty of innocent things," and how, "amid all our ills that come like veils between us and heaven, the contemplation of a deep and starry peace is good and healthful to our minds."[1] He watches Jeanne asleep, and finds consolation for his political anxieties and disappointments in the fancied visions of her infancy. His grandson Georges entices from him the rather banal sentiment that "our sons' sons enrapture us." It was well perhaps to write, but was it well to print, that toy comedy with its nursery stammerings? But, what is far more serious, many of these poems lack the ring of genuine feeling; and nothing wearies more surely or more quickly than the suspicion of mock simplicity. Occasionally, indeed, we catch and welcome a gleam of politics and even a faint echo of satiric thunder, while with the past and the present there is mingled in larger measure than heretofore the future, the new and possibly regenerate world in which these grandchildren will do their life-work.

The style of these pieces, like their subjects, aims at simplicity, but it is not always natural. Short sentences and elliptical constructions mark all the poetry and prose of these later years, but nowhere do they become such mannerisms as here. Take for instance the following lines from a poem on the beach at Guernsey.

[1] Certe il est salutaire et bon pour la pensée

. . . . . .

De contempler parfois à travers tous nos maux,
Qui sont entre le ciel et nous comme les voiles,
Une profonde paix toute faite d'étoiles.

(L'Art d'être grand-père, I. ii.)

Conjunctions are almost wholly suppressed, quite half the verbs are omitted, and we get effects like this: "Port noises. Whistles of engines under steam. Military music coming in puffs. Bustle on the quay. French voices. Merci. Bonjour. Adieu. It must be late, for, see! my red-breast comes close up to me to sing. Noise of distant hammers in a forge. Water splashes. You hear a steamer puff. A tug enters. Immense panting of the sea."[1] Here Hugo is not aiming at vigor, but at fresh simplicity. He adapts himself easily to his self-imposed limitations, using such words and images as he might have used to Jeanne or Georges as they tripped along beside him, but not wholly without glimpses of the grander powers that were revealed that very year in their full splendor in the second "Legend of the Centuries."

This cyclic poem may be best considered here, though its concluding part did not appear till six years later. Its subject is human progress through all the centuries that separate Cain from Robespierre; its inspiration a robust faith in human destiny, that "sums up all aspects of humanity in one vast movement toward the light;" or, as he himself expresses it, his book shows "the slow and supreme unfolding of Liberty . . . the rising of mankind from the shadow to the ideal." It was, as he said, a slow growth, like a cedar-tree made

[1] Bruits de ports. Sifflements des machines chauffées.
Musique militaire arrivant par bouffées.
Brouhaha sur le quai. Voix françaises. Merci.
Bonjour. Adieu. Sans doute il est tard, car voici
Que vient tout près de moi chanter mon rouge-gorge.
Vacarme de marteaux lointains dans une forge.
L'eau clapote. On entend haleter un steamer.
Une mouche entre. Souffle immense de la mer.
(L'Art d'être grand-père, I. xi.)

to endure, and indeed it contains Hugo's best title to poetic immortality; for while the later volumes may show some falling off in vigor, they bear witness to a tenacious persistency in upbuilding the original conception. To this he introduces the reader by "The Vision whence sprang this book" (i. 9) where to his typifying mind, that makes each individual a symbol, history presents itself as a series of pictures illustrating his own ethical creed. One sees here how much of the primitive man, of the myth-maker, there was in Hugo's nature.[1] To him all human life seems under the dominance of a universal antinomy, Fate and God. But if this thought lights up the obscurity of his "Vision" of the centuries, it is at the expense of their continuity. What had first seemed a wall is broken into an archipelago on which his fancy sees a charnel palace, built by fatality, habited by death, while over it hover the wings of hope and the radiance of liberty. Out of this vision springs his "Legend of the Centuries," his "bird's-eye view of the world."

He begins naturally with mythology, with Hebrew and Indian legends; then turns to the Olympians and their struggle with the Titans, in which he sees the conflict of mind with the forces of nature. But in vanquishing the powers of earth these gods enjoy only a mournful triumph; for the world has lost its gladness, the Bacchantes have torn their Orpheus, and "the lions mourn the absence of the giants," until at last titanic Nature reasserts itself and cries to the stupefied Olympians, "O gods, there is a God."[2]

[1] Cp. Lanson, p. 1030.

[2] See "Les Temps paniques" and "Le Titan," especially vol. i. pp. 77, 78, 80, 94, of the *édition définitive*, 16mo, to which all subsequent references apply.

These Greek divinities, creatures of idealist aspiration, reappear later in the "Legend" as symbolic of the optimistic pantheism of the Renaissance. In "Le Satyre" the light-hearted faun, a materialistic hedonist with the "immodest innocence of Rhea" (iii. 5), confronted by the Olympians, sings unabashed of divine chaos, "the eager spouse of the infinite" (p. 14), and bids the gods give back to mankind the age of gold (p. 15), from which beneath their rule the race has degenerated, "burning and ravaging where it should fertilize" (p. 17). But there shall be a renascence from this fatality. Casting aside the cloven foot, "man shall usurp the fire, mount the throne" (p. 21), the Real shall be born again, that world which the gods have conquered but not comprehended. Then there shall be "place for the radiance of the universal soul . . . One light, one genius everywhere, an all-embracing harmony." And the Faun closes his rhapsody with the cry: "Give place to the all! I am Pan. Jupiter, kneel!" (p. 23).

Against this intoxication of democracy and arrogance of natural instinct, Hugo introduces Mahomet to assert the pre-eminent moral verities, the personal oneness of God, and the reality of the higher law. Asceticism, too, has its place, though a small one, in the poet's vision. The Christian sentiment that all is vanity is turned to his democratic purpose more than once [1] to show that if all is not vanity, kings and conquerors certainly are. The worm of destruction exists to re-establish equality, "to preserve the balance;" but

[1] For instance, the close of the "Sept merveilles du monde," i. 283, and "L'Épopée du ver," ii. 3, with "Le Poète au ver," ii. 25.

over "the incorruptible life," the things of the mind, it has no power.[1]

He takes his types of royalty from the monstrosities. Xerxes, Clytemnestra, Attila, the French Philippe le Bel, the Spaniards Sancho and Alphonso,[2] best suit his purpose. Among his heroes the Cid holds the first place for his magnanimous loyalty and filial devotion.[3] With the Franks, Charles and Roland,[4] are associated the less familiar names of Welf, Aymerillot, and Eviradnus,[5] in whom are incorporated the mediæval or possibly Quixotic spirit of men who were "kings in India and barons in Europe," when "at the waving of their swords the cries of eagles, combats, clarions of battle, kings, gods, and epics whirled in the gloom," to be silent of grotesquer feats.[6]

Then follow several pieces on the Turks that recall the brilliant colors of the "Orientales" thirty years before,[7] and introduce vivid pictures of the feudal cruelty and oppression that followed the heroic age. Such are "Les Quatre jours d'Elciis" (ii. 217), and the tragic stories of Angus and of the children of

[1] Il faut bien que le ver soit là pour l'équilibre (ii. 9).

La vie incorruptible est hors de ta frontière . . .
Tu n'y peut rien (Le Poète au ver, ii. 25).

[2] i. 109; i. 105; i. 125; i. 169; i. 137.

[3] i. 137–161, 209, 233, 249.

[4] i. 207, 217; ii. 33.

[5] ii. 193; i. 223; ii. 55.

[6] Rois dans l'Inde ils étaient en Europe barons,
Et les aigles, les cris des combats, les clairons,
Les batailles, les rois, les dieux, les épopées,
Tourbillonnent dans l'ombre au vent de leurs épées (ii. 30).

Here too we may find archangels wiping their swords on the clouds (ii. 189) and ancient chiefs strangling kings and using their bodies as clubs to kill emperors (ii. 92).

[7] Especially Zim-Zizimi *(ii. 97)* and Sultan Mourad (ii. 111).

Isora,[1] whose murderers suffer only from avenging Providence, since for such monster kings as Tiphaine and Radbert there is no justice on earth. In more modern times the Armada evokes a noble poem (iii. 41), there are fierce satires on royalty and especially on Napoleon III. that recall the finest lines of "Les Châtiments,"[2] while the glories of the First Empire are recalled by the memory of his father's magnanimity and of his uncle's heroism, and by the return of the ashes of the great Emperor (iv. 23).[3] Here, too, are utterances of the noblest patriotism, together with pathetic pictures of childhood and somewhat nebulous pseudo-philosophic visions.[4]

Though the "Legend" is ostensibly epic, there runs through it all a personal element that allies it to lyric verse; and, as Brunetière remarks, this has influenced the choice of subjects as well as their treatment. The passion of the poet is nearly always to be felt, his thesis nearly always obvious. So the whole lacks the serenity of a true epic, the more because the poet's convictions are less intellectual than moral. He is borne along by his feelings, not the master of them; he is less a Baconian observer than an Orphic seer, a sort of "primordial force;" but these are the very qualities that make him, as the same keen critic ob-

[1] L'Aigle du casque, ii. 137; La Confiance du marquis Fabrice, ii. 165.

[2] E. g., Les Mangeurs, iii. 109; La Colère du bronze, addressed particularly to Morny, iv. 67; and Le Prisonnier (Bazaine), iv. 85. In "La Vision de Dante," iv. 139, Pius IX. is made to share the bad eminence of Napoleon.

[3] Après la bataille, iv. 51; Le Cimetière d'Eylau, iv. 55.

[4] E. g., L'Élégie des fléaux, iv. 97; Après les fourches claudines, iv. 89; Le Crapaud, iv. 131; Les Petits, iv. 197; Vingtième siècle, iv. 217; La Trompette de jugement, iv. 247.

serves, "not perhaps the greatest poet, but the greatest lyrist of all time."

More directly, though hardly more profoundly, philosophic than the "Legend," are four poems, published between 1878 and 1880, — "Le Pape," "Religions et la religion," "L'Âne," and "La Pitié suprême," which may be considered together so far as they need to be considered at all. The first of them is the least unintelligible. His ideal Pope should symbolize the eternal conscience of God, should unite all the elements of idealism and virtue as Hugo conceives them. He should abandon all human pomp and pride, leave Rome itself, and having rebuked, like his Master, the sycophants of the East, should stoop to the lowliest charity, gather in his train the outcast and the poor, reconcile men and nations, preach the mutual duty of rich and poor, of aid and of gratitude, advocate Christian socialism, condemn capital punishment and retaliation, and, in short, realize Hugo's idea of a true "Imitation of Christ," such as he thought illustrated by himself.

"Religions and Religion" undertakes to show that any creed narrowly comprehended by human prejudice is worse in its effect on moral character than all unbelief. The counterpart of this paradox is presented in "L'Âne," which would prove that false science is worse than none; and having fallen into the paradoxical vein, Hugo borrows another from Danton to make us believe, in "La Pitié suprême," that the executioner is more worthy of pity than the victim. Even the poet's most enthusiastic admirers are wont to glide lightly over these errors of the old man eloquent.

Hugo had still in his portfolios materials for the last volume of his "Legend" and for "Les Quatre vents de l'esprit," parts of which are as good as all but his very

best. As its title suggests, this last of the poet's collections shows his work in the four fields of satire, drama, the lyric, and the epic. The first is, as usual, the best; for he is right in saying that "hatred of evil and love of the just had been the weapons of his youth, and his shields contempt and disdain," with which he had striven to battle against every oppressor of mind and body.[1] Perhaps the most interesting among these pieces is the final statement of his attitude toward the established Church and his once cherished middle ages (i. 111). This confession of faith or of the lack of it surprises at once by its vigor, its boldness, and its nebulous indefiniteness. Admirable, too, is his picture of a rich church-warden who "knows that a good God is quite essential to keep the hungry people quiet," and is "proud to feel that in his devotion he is taking the masses in his leash and God under his patronage."[2] One dwells the longer on this first part because Hugo's dramatic "wind" blows with much less vigor, and hardly advances the little skiff of his genius toward the ever-fleeting goal of his dramatic ambition.

The lyric section, like the satiric, embraces the work of forty years, and hence of very varied moods. There are poems where all Nature has a gloomy voice and the

[1] Vol. i. pp. 5, 25 (edition of 1882, to which reference is hereafter made).

[2] i. 34. The lines cited are: —

C'est que le peuple vil croira, le voyant croire,
C'est qu'il faut abrutir ces gens, car ils ont faim,
C'est qu'un bon dieu quelconque est nécessaire enfin.
Là-dessus rangez-vous, le suisse frappe, il entre,
Il étale au banc d'œuvre un majestueux ventre,
Fier de sentir qu'il prend dans sa dévotion,
Le peuple en laisse et Dieu sous sa protection.

Noteworthy also are "Idolâtries et philosophies" (i. 118) and No. XXV. (i. 96).

sea is still speaking to him of Léopoldine, while in his exquisite "Walks among the Rocks" the conviction of divine goodness and love reaches its supreme expression.[1] The epic section, finally, is a series of brilliant evocations and half-lyric denunciations of the shortcomings of royalty, ending like "Les Châtiments" with a bright vision of the future.

A drama, "Torquemada," closes the long series of works given to the press by Hugo, who seems to have regarded it, as Goethe did the second part of "Faust," as a sort of final legacy to the world, "his grandest conception," the product of the reflections of thirty years. He certainly overestimated it; for though it has many great beauties, it is quite unsuited to the stage, as are also his posthumous dramas of "Le Théâtre en liberté." The culminating scene of this poem of toleration, the plea of the Grand Rabbi before their Catholic Majesties Ferdinand and Isabella, is indeed a masterpiece of pathetic eloquence. But the work should be classed with the philosophic pieces rather than with the dramas, and so leads us naturally to his posthumous "Fin de Satan," an unfinished epic of the French Revolution, to which Hugo, like most of his countrymen, accords a cardinal place in the development of the human mind and of society.

Here the venerable poet tells how Satan had made of the three weapons of Cain, the nail, the rod, and the stone, three germs of crime, the sword, the gibbet, and the prison, with which he purposed to disfigure the face of the world. But a white plume, a remnant of Lucifer's glory, remained in heaven, and under the glance of God became the angel Liberty, who overcomes not only the results of evil but its very spirit; for Satan himself,

[1] Vol. ii. pp. 67, 74, 150.

after a mighty struggle, sends her on her work to break the Bastille, to release its skeleton captives, to foster innocent love, and to emancipate mankind. An unfinished section, "Le Gibet," on the life and death of Christ has parts equal in vigor to any previous work of the poet; but, as is admitted even by Mr. Swinburne, the material framework of Hugo's whole conception is "so self-contradictory, so inconsistent in its accumulation of incompatible impossibilities, that we cannot even imagine a momentary and fantastical acceptance of it."

Of four other posthumous volumes, "Toute la lyre" and "Le Théâtre en liberté," it has been said that if they add nothing to the glory of Hugo, neither do they detract from it. Indeed they inspire a kind of awe at the huge volume of his perennial productivity, — his "enormous torrent of speech," to borrow his own phrase of Danton. So far as political, social, or literary ideas are concerned, the thirty thousand lines of the former work only repeat what he had already said many times, much of which was commonplace before he said it at all. There is the familiar regiophobia, the belief in fraternity, progress, perfectibility, and the naïve desire that he and his Maker should come to a better understanding for the good of the human race. Here as always, perhaps more than ever, he feels his apostleship and its burdens, and proclaims both with an exasperating iteration of the capital I.

If now we consider Hugo's place in French literature, one is tempted, with Lemaître, to call him "the mightiest gatherer of words since the world began." But it needs not that critic's acuteness to discover that there is far too much repetition in his work, and, after "Les Châtiments," little intellectual development. The fact *is that* the young Hugo had said all he had to say in

or before the "Autumn Leaves," and the second Hugo had delivered his whole message before 1860. On the other hand, if we look at his work from the rhetorical standpoint, his management of words and images, there is no loss, perhaps there is gain, to the very last.[1]

Hugo was distinctly an average man both intellectually and ethically. He had the rancor and vanity of the typical bourgeois, his treasure was in an earthen vessel, his genius wholly disproportioned to his mind. Hence he constantly laid himself open to ridicule and parody by fatuously ignoring innate congruity and historical perspective. It is as though Elijah's mantle had fallen on the typical philistine to whom the Revolution divides darkness from light, and "humanity is an immense Punch and Judy show." [2] So deliciously naïve is his self-complacency that he seems to himself to be Mont Blanc, or Atlas, or a "torch enlightening the world." But at the same time he has the good qualities of the bourgeois. He seems thoroughly sincere in his domestic affections, and he did not relax the sustained ardor of his literary labor for sixty-nine years, practising what he had preached, "amending old works by making better ones" that were not always new.

It would be foolish to attempt a history of Hugo's ideas. "They follow, but do not beget, one another." He reflects De Vigny's philosophy of history, Gautier's Neo-Hellenism, and the social sympathies of Sand and Michelet. Indeed, his convictions and his philosophy are no more essential elements in his literary individ-

[1] Cp. Lemaître, Contemporains, iv. 132, to whom I am also much indebted in what follows.

[2] This is the point of Lemaître's epigrammatic "Homais à Pathmos." Veuillot's "Jocrisse à Pathmos," alluding to the senile loves of the "Chansons des rues et des bois," has a sharper sting.

uality than is the color of the chameleon. What is his, and his only, is the way in which he expresses them, — his rhetoric, his prosody, that gathers up thought as in a prism and divides it into rainbow hues. For he is truly golden-mouthed. "No poet of ancient or modern times has had the imagination of form in such abundance, force, precision, grandeur," says Lemaître. "He, more than any other, had the glory of rejuvenating the imagination and renewing the language of his century."

Here his work is less contestable than in politics or sociology; and it is here alone that his literary influence has been great and lasting. It is necessary, then, to examine briefly wherein lies the new in Hugo's rhetoric and in his management of verse. And, first of all, one observes that if Hugo has a conspicuous lack of humor, he has a certain kind of wit that shows itself in a keen relish for sharp contrasts.[1] The most superficial study of his metaphors illustrates this. None but he in France would "put a liberty cap on the dictionary" and "crush the spirals of paraphrase," or "make the oratorical style shiver in its Spanish ruff."[2] Such wit is never lofty, but it is often effective. Yet, on the other hand, this delight in incongruity, coupled with his lack of humor, has betrayed him more than once into grotesque lapses of taste. But whether bridled or free, his intense feeling and vivid imagination poured into the language a stream of images, new or forgotten, that broaden from the

[1] From this point to the close of the chapter I am much beholden to Faguet, xix. siècle.

[2] Contemplations, I. i. 7. The whole piece, "Réponse à un acte d'accusation," and also "À propos d'Horace" (I. i. 13) abound in similar phrases.

"Orientales" to the "Contemplations," and form the mirror of Hugo's peculiar glory. They are evolved from no mental elaboration; they seem to spring from direct sensations, as though each thought were born in his mind with a train of attendant similes. Indeed, he is embarrassed by his own exuberance. He sees so much, so many suggestions of comparison leap to his mind, that the reader will often be dazzled by his fulness or perhaps shocked by a mixed metaphor.[1] And yet, if Proteus will, which is not often, he can drop this garment stiff with embroidery and gold, and write in the sustained periods and polished simplicity of the Classicists. If we regard only the expression, the mode, Hugo is unsurpassed, not alone in his own peculiar style, but in almost every other.

And this applies almost as much to his prosody. He was not only a compeller of words, but a master of metre and rhythm, and here at least a master that never nodded. So perfect was his ear for melody that a study of his metres is almost a complete course in French verse. Men with greater pretensions have built on his foundations; but neither Banville nor Verlaine shows a more delicate instinct of the relation of sound and sentiment than Hugo. He has at his command a whole tonic scale of vowel effects, "from grave to gay, from lively to severe," and he knows Wagner's art of drawing harmony from discord, though his delicate shadings will often elude even a trained foreign ear, and mock the artifices of the modern Symbolists who try to reduce to rule what Hugo attained by instinct. He made his rhymes and his metres, as in French verse they should be, the maid-servants of rhythm. He did not, as he once declared, "put that

[1] See Faguet, l. c. p. 226, for numerous examples.

great stupid alexandrine out of joint." Quite otherwise. He gave it new life and elasticity by a wise liberty that he never suffered to degenerate into license. He made it so flexible, gave it such variety, that it could serve the most manifold needs. But while he thus enlarged the functions of this classic form, no one knew so well as he in an endless variety of lyric metres to give orchestration to his themes, to adapt cadence to sentiment and rhyme to reason, if indeed he does not sometimes make the one do duty for the other. For if we can be deaf to its charm, we shall almost always see, even in the best of Hugo's poetry, a certain haziness of thought that escapes an ultimate analysis.

In his rendering of emotion Hugo is uneven, as all who attain the highest reaches are sure to be. He feels so intensely about some things that he sacrifices clearness to passion, and this excited expression is apt to follow him as a mannerism where he feels very little; but where he is too deeply stirred to be artificial and yet keeps his self-control, he is wholly admirable. As a poet of love he seems least spontaneous, perhaps because, having married the choice of his youth, he found for this sentiment other outlets than the presses of his publisher. The fireside pieces that alternate with the amorous ditties in the "Autumn Leaves" give the latter a very hollow sound; and in the old man's "Chansons" there is less passion than joy of life.

But if here he is artificial or cold, his political satires, though not without lines of incoherent passion, show him at his best, and perhaps supreme among poets because of his absolute though inconsistent sincerity. The pathetic memorials of Villequier

also are genuine in feeling and good in a lesser kind. But later there grew to be something mechanical in his harping on the pathetic string, and in "L'Art d'être grand-père" it sinks at times to a senile puerility.

The whole Republican movement that culminated in 1848 had been nursed in glittering generalities. Of that generation Hugo is a type, perhaps an extreme type. No one talks more persistently than he of justice, humanity, progress, liberty, the people, the republic, the sublime verities; but he is at no pains to tell us what he means by these very indefinite terms. His nebulous socialism reminds one of the "general warmth" of Jean Paul. He likes to talk of great thinkers, of whose company he clearly regards himself the leader; and he indulges in lists of them that make the judicious grieve, for they show that they were to him little more than names, while he was so out of touch with the scientific thought of his later years that he made no effort to understand the evolutionists he affected to despise.[1] Now, as Faguet observes, many great poets have had as few new ideas as Hugo; but none of them ever persistently proclaimed that they were pre-eminently men of ideas, — that the poet was by nature prophet, torch, trumpet, as Hugo loved to call himself, though he might rather be likened to an æolian harp, changing his note with each new political breeze. And yet Hugo is always as sure of his unchanging consistency as that he is about to proclaim an oracle when he reiterates a commonplace.[2]

What literary leadership or constructive criticism

[1] For instance, "La Légende des siècles," iv. 175 sqq.

[2] See Faguet, l. c. p. 183, who shows that Hugo never led nor shared in the creation of popular sentiments, but always followed and reflected them.

was to be expected of such a man? At what did he aim, and what did he attain? Again the early and the later Hugo are as wide asunder as the poles. The preface to "Cromwell" assures us that "human history presents no poetry save as judged from the height of monarchical ideas." His exile was to reveal to him that "Romanticism and Socialism were identical," and he calmly asserted that he had been a Socialist since 1828. But before as well as after the *coup d'état* he was possessed with the fixed idea that the man of letters in general, and himself in particular, could be and ought to be a popular leader, — a view that seems derived from Madame de Staël's theory that "literature is the expression of society." This may explain why his own work has nearly always a social thesis clearly defined, while his direct literary criticism is the extreme of vague impressionism. Here he was as inferior to Gautier as he was superior to him as a poet.

Hugo's originality, then, is in his form. He is classic, because he expresses the ideas of everybody in the language of the elect. Herein lies the secret of his democratic popularity: he glorifies the commonplace, social, moral, philosophic; he transfigures it by his imagery, till he gives it a new meaning without taking from it its familiarity. Herein lies the excuse and the reason for the repetitions of his later volumes. The range of the commonplace is naturally limited; but his amplifications and brilliant illustration of his trite discoveries are so rich as almost to make his old truth seem new. He is also wonderfully vivid in his direct descriptions, and the strength of his dramas is in "local color" rather than in character, in picture rather than in narrative. But far more remarkable than this is the poetic personification of inanimate objects.

He imparts a more genuine life and individuality to his Notre-Dame than to Esmeralda or Frollo, less to Gilliatt than to the rocks on which he won his tragic triumph. Chateaubriand and Lamartine had foreshadowed this art, but Hugo first realized potentialities that have been pushed by Zola perhaps beyond their natural limits.[1]

It is clear that these are epic qualities; and Hugo would be a great epic poet if his intrusive egoism did not constantly mar the impersonality of his narration. But in this attempt to fuse the epic with the lyric the latter dominates, because of his exquisite feeling for form and his love of it for its own sake. He delights in symmetrical arrangements, in parallels not alone of phrases, but of strophes and even of whole poems, which he places over against one another; he revels in such prosodical *tours de force* as the "Pas d'armes du roi Jean" or "Les Djinns," in development by multiplied images, and in striking rhetorical effects of antithesis and climax.

Intellectually Hugo is related to De Stael; as an artist he has more of Chateaubriand. He is more purposeful than Lamartine, more robust than De Vigny; his personal will is more obvious, his effort more laborious and sustained. He has his eye more constantly on the public, and would not gladly "reserve his laurels for posterity," that, as Byron remarks, "does not always claim the bright reversion." He is a great writer rather than a great author, but his faults are of the kind that will least affect his popularity. For these are obvious only to the cultured, but his merits appeal to all, and especially to the democratic masses, in whom he rouses vague sympathies that others will

[1] See chap. xii.

translate into action. More than any French lyric or epic poet that preceded him, and more than any that has yet followed, he continues to hold the great public. All schools of modern verse that have arisen in the last-half century may call him "father," and he will long continue to form the rhetorical and poetical taste of French youth. And it is well that it should be so; for, as one of the younger critics of our day has said, "While others have troubled, weakened, disenchanted the human heart, Hugo has reassured, established, encouraged it. He has communicated to it something of his own robust and obstinate virtue." [1]

[1] Pellissier, p. 277.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE EVOLUTION OF HISTORY AND CRITICISM.

It has been said that during the latter period of his life Hugo barred but did not deflect the current of literary evolution. We have now to examine what was the nature and direction of that current; and if, as seems certain, the predominating influence has been scientific, it is by studying those departments of literature that are most closely related to science that we shall gain the clew to the course of development in the regions of pure art. Never has literature been more under the influence of philosophy, never have critics been more frankly recognized as the guides and representatives of French culture. It is to these that the literature of our scientific age looks for guidance and inspiration, just as the Romantic period lent the intoxication of its imagination to history, which under the new spirit has almost ceased to belong to literature at all. The Romantic historians, then, will form the most suitable starting-point for an investigation of the general trend of poetry, drama, and fiction during the generation of Hugo's exile and triumph.[1]

One of the direct results of the impulse given to letters by De Staël and Chateaubriand was the enfran-

[1] Of course it is only with historians, philosophers, or critics, in their relation to literature, that we have to do; hence Cousin and Comte are passed over, while Taine and Renan take a prominent place; hence, too, Michelet occupies the chief place among historians, while Martin is not named.

chisement of historical curiosity, for one cannot yet call it science; and this curiosity was greatly stimulated by the political conditions that accompanied the rise of the Romantic School. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries history, even that of France, had been much neglected; but the children of the Revolution were eager to know the wrongs and struggles of their ancestors, and hailed with enthusiasm the romances of Walter Scott and Chateaubriand's brilliant "Martyrs." Signs of an historical revival multiply in the decade preceding the Revolution of 1830. Great collections of memoirs were printed;[1] and these, with the accumulated treasures of the Benedictines, were philosophically and scientifically analyzed by Guizot and De Tocqueville, who belong rather to history than to literature, as do Thiers and Mignet, though the latter has much art in the luminous grouping of details.

Such part of the work of Augustin Thierry[2] as was inspired by his sympathy with the bourgeois monarchy of the Orleanists falls also outside our limits, but he was early diverted by the affectionate study of mediæval documents to a more artistic end. He who had spent his youth devouring the pages of Chateaubriand and his young manhood in the eager study of Walter Scott, in whom, as he himself tells us, "Ivanhoe" caused transports of enthusiasm, was now to communicate that same enthusiasm to his countrymen by his "Stories of the Merovingians" and his "Conquest

[1] Some two hundred and thirty volumes in all, among them the Mémoires de Saint-Simon.

[2] Born 1795; died 1856. The "Lettres sur l'histoire de France," 1827, "Études historiques," 1834, and "Histoire du tiers-état," 1853, hardly belong to literature.

of England." It was his mission, he said, "to plant in France the banner of historical reform, to wage war alike on the writers without learning to see and the writers without imagination to reproduce," who "travestied facts, denaturalized characters, and overlaid all with a color as vague as it was false." The seventeenth century had treated history as literature, the eighteenth called it philosophical; Thierry made it scientific by a profound study of the sources, and literary by the life with which he infused the relics of a forgotten past. To Voltaire Merovingian history had been a "bear-garden." Thierry's imagination constructed from it a series of elaborate pictures to which every available document had contributed its detail of feature, dress, or manners; while to it all he added a sympathy with the people and with the popular cause that would have been impossible in pre-Revolutionary France.

The same picturesqueness is found in Barante, and the same sympathy with the oppressed; but the greatest evoker of the past that the Romantic School or indeed France ever produced is Michelet,[1] who both by birth and sympathy represented the democratic and anti-clerical masses, as Guizot and Thiers did the Orleanist bourgeoisie. But in him more than in any other historian of France literary imagination inter-

[1] Born 1798; died 1874. He was the son of a printer of Paris, and began literary work by a summary, "Précis de l'histoire moderne, 1828." His most noteworthy historical works are: Procès des templiers, 1841–1852; La Sorcière, 1862; Histoire de France, 28 vols., 1833–1867; Histoire du xix. siècle, 1876; and outside the historical field, L'Oiseau, 1856; L'Insecte, 1857; L'Amour, 1858; La Femme, 1859; La Mer, 1861; La Montagne, 1868.

Criticism: Corread, Michelet (Classiques populaires); Faguet, xix. siècle; Saintsbury, in Encyclopædia Britannica.

penetrates and vivifies vast erudition, till in the alembic of his mind documents become poetry and history intuition. At the rifled cathedral tombs of Saint Denis he feels and makes us feel the dead kings beneath the marble slabs, till like genii they rise before our fancy,—Dagobert, Chilperic, and "the fair, the blond, the terrible Fredegonde." His palpitating sympathy makes him contemporary of each epoch as he writes of it. He thrills now with the faith of Bernard, now with the patriotism of the Maid of Orleans; with the Reformation he becomes a Protestant, and a democratic iconoclast with the Revolution. Like Carlyle, he is always present in his history, explaining, animating, pleading. The rush of his narration so carries away the reader that serious omissions pass unheeded and inaccuracies of style are forgiven. The whole is delightful, stimulating, for all its obvious faults of proportion, and in spite of special pleading that would be disingenuous if one did not feel that with him, as with Carlyle, the prejudice and the hate are part of the man that it would change his whole nature to eliminate.

To him France is an entity, a living being. It is "a soul and a personality" of which he undertakes the history. Hence he is led to study with peculiar care those traces that climate and physical environment have left on racial character. He delights to paint the common people in their daily life, making the heroic natural and the sublime comprehensible by the minute reality of his sympathetic art, that from myriad documentary details could give past centuries new birth. Through his official position as guardian of the National Archives he found open to him an almost unexplored mine, rich in precious details of mediæval *manners*, which under another's hand might have re-

mained as dry as the dust that had gathered on them, but beneath his touch, transformed by his imagination and irradiated by his unique style, charmed the world by their unexpected revelations.

It was natural that his romantic and lyric genius should show itself best where it had greatest scope, in the middle ages. The episodes of Saint Louis, of the Albigensian crusade, and especially the chapters on Joan of Arc, with the superb "tableau de France" that opens the second volume of his history, are probably the finest portions of all the vast work. Very characteristic too of Michelet's genius are his curious study of the trial of the Knights-Templars, and that rhapsody of demonology, "La Sorcière," whose first part has been justly called a "nightmare of extraordinary verisimilitude and poetic power." But unfortunately, before he had completed this period of his history, a second and much less happy manner was inaugurated by a course of lectures against the Jesuits delivered at the Collège de France in 1838. These were so violent that the government felt forced to interfere, but not until the agitation had attained a popularity that is reflected in Sue's well-known "Juif errant" (1844–1845). But though in these lectures the democrat and the Huguenot get the better of the historian, the eccentricity of his arguments has not affected their eloquence or their sincerity. Yet it is clear that from this time his work grows more partisan, and by its plebeian and anti-clerical fanaticism loses somewhat in interest and still more in historical value, though it gained in immediate effect, for its exaggerated symbolism flattered and fostered the aspirations of the Socialists of 1848. Now and again such deeds as the taking of the Bastille will evoke his old poetic vision,

but he seldom speaks of the Revolution, or even of the Renascence, without suffering party passion to mar the calm beauty of his picture. He even came to apologize for his treatment of the middle ages, fearing that he had been too sympathetic with the Christian spirit.[1] It has been epigrammatically said of him that he forgot his history when he wrote politics, but not his politics when he wrote history.

His political views drove him from his archives and his professor's chair after Napoleon's *coup d'état;* and this was not without gain to literature, for his poetic spirit found inexhaustible consolation in studies of nature. Not in Chateaubriand nor in Saint-Pierre shall we find the sensitive sympathy that thrills through Michelet's prose poems of "The Bird," "The Insect," "The Sea," and "The Mountain." But, alas! here too he fell, as the French proverb has it, in the direction that he inclined; and the vices of his qualities are painfully manifest in "L'Amour" and "La Femme," errors from which a more developed sense of humor would surely have saved him. It is to these studies aside from the main work of his life that "La Sorcière" belongs, and also the posthumous "Banquet," a most vigorous and specious socialistic pamphlet.

Michelet's historical style is more striking than flowing. It advances by leaps and bounds, not by careful development. Its succession of vivid evocations appeals primarily to the emotions, and their power lies not in the thought alone, but also in its rhythmic expression. Such staccato sentences produce their best effect when read aloud with oratorical emphasis. But when with a poet's fancy he writes of

[1] A curious witness to his anti-Christian violence is contained in "Revue bleue," June, 1895 (p. 731).

nature, or perchance of physio-psychology, his style becomes more supple, undulating, musical, less obviously rhetorical, more subtly rhythmical, of indefinable charm and exquisite art. These are qualities that will assure Michelet an enduring place in the literature of his generation when the histories of his more cautious and impartial but less picturesque contemporaries shall have been superseded by still closer diplomatic investigations, and yet more rigid application of that historical method which has been a natural and inevitable result of the scientific evolution. Ours is the history of a Naturalistic period. Michelet, whether he would or no, was more than any other *the* Romantic historian.

The Naturalistic evolution has doubtless been a gain to history as a science, but it has been at the cost of its literary value. The new spirit of accurate analysis admits of no generalizing theorists like Guizot, and would smile at such lyrists as Michelet. It subordinates with a stern self-abnegation the *dulce* to the *utile*. We have great historical investigators, great historians perhaps in modern France, but not a great historical literature.[1] The scientific spirit has carried its analysis so far that a just synthesis becomes almost beyond human grasp. Never have single movements or periods been studied with more zeal or acumen; yet our diligent investigators do not command the place in literature or in popular esteem that was won by their Romantic predecessors.

But while history was being thus transformed, an evolution as fundamental and even more important to

[1] Taine's "Ancien régime" is not history so much as philosophical criticism of history. Louis Blanc's voluminous work belongs rather to the category of demagogic declamation.

the development of literature had shown itself in criticism. Literary historians and self-constituted lawgivers there had been since the days of the Pleiad, and they had been men of no mean talent and industry, but they lacked the scientific spirit and the comparative method that are the peculiar boast of modern French criticism and give it a unique place in the literatures of Europe. Nowhere else do we find that criticism attracts such talents or gains such rewards both of money and of fame. It is therefore of peculiar interest to trace the brief evolution of this *genre* in France, the more as it is here that we must seek the key to past development and the clew to the immediate future.[1]

French comparative criticism may be said to begin for history with Voltaire's "Essay on Manners" and for sociology with Montesquieu's "Spirit of Laws." But it was not till the eve of our own century that Madame de Staël applied these principles to books in her "Literature Considered in its Connection with Social Constitutions" (1800), and enforced the lesson with her ripest powers in "L'Allemagne" (1813). She first made criticism cosmopolitan, and her method was continued by Barante (1782–1866), and then, more ably, by Villemain (1790–1870), who was supreme in this field from the Restoration till the rise of Romanticism. He taught, as Madame de Staël had done, that literature was the expression of society, and he sought to prove this by elaborate though partial and superficial studies of the middle ages and of the

[1] The remainder of this chapter has appeared, with some omissions, in "The Sewanee Review" for August, 1895. Compare throughout Hatzfeld and Meunier, Les Critiques littéraires du xix. siècle, Introduction, which distinguishes æsthetic, moral, historic, and psychologic *criticism*, and favors a fusion of them all.

eighteenth century. But his learning had much more breadth than depth, and the comparative method betrayed him at times into shallow generalizations. Still, Villemain is always interesting and sometimes stirring, as might be expected from a professor of eloquence in the national university. But with the founding of the "Globe" and the gathering of the Cénacles the current of criticism divides. One branch lingers in the sluggish channels of an objective dogmatism, that suits so well the love of system and logic deeply rooted in French character; while the other branch, full of the subjective spirit that had been the chief factor in the Romantic reform, leaps and bounds in the sometimes shallow rapids of unfettered genius.

Among the representatives of the objective group Nisard (1806–1888) led the forlorn hope of the decadent Classicists,[1] while the Swiss Protestant, Vinet, sought a similar objective standard in morals. Thus both persisted in measuring literature by abstract rules, by absolute canons of art or ethics; and both turned their eyes with dogmatic steadfastness from the personality of the author whose work they criticised. "I could not love," said Nisard, "without preferring, and I could not prefer without doing injustice." This cold, martinet spirit marks itself in them and in their successors by impatience of irregular genius. It has always sought its ideals in the cold correctness of the School of 1660. Nisard and all who have followed him, especially Brunetière, feel and show a haughty contempt for the generous but sometimes inconsistent appreciations of those who base their critical opinions on subjective impressions. Criticism like Nisard's is an art that can be taught; subjective criticism is

[1] E. g., in the "Littérature française," 1844–1849, and 1861.

from its nature individual, good, or valueless according to the critic. Of this school Sainte-Beuve was the creator and is still the unchallenged master.

It was the good fortune of the Romanticists to count almost from the first in their inner circle, and always among their sympathizers, one of the greatest critics of all time, one of the most generously appreciative, catholic-minded men that France has brought forth. None of them exercised a wider or more beneficent influence. Born at Boulogne of half-English parentage, Sainte-Beuve (1804–1869)[1] made brilliant medical studies at Paris, began in 1824 to write for "Le Globe" short critical articles, the present "Premiers lundis," and in 1827 found his true vocation on its critical staff. Warm sympathy earned him the friendship of Hugo, and his genius won the praise of Goethe. To his work in these apprentice years is due, more than to that of any man else, the revival of an intelligent interest in the sixteenth century, and especially in Ronsard, a selection from whose works he edited in 1828. Such studies stirred his own poetic vein, and, led perhaps by the feeling that he would criticise better what he had himself attempted, he published in 1829 "La Vie, poésies et pensées de Joseph Delorme," a sort of Jacobin Werther-René, for whose sentimental sorrows

[1] Critical works: Tableau historique de la poésie française au xvi. siècle, 1828; Critiques et portraits littéraires, 5 vols., 1832–1839; Port-Royal, 5 vols., 1840–1860; Portraits littéraires, 2 vols., 1844; Portraits contemporains, 2 vols., 1846; Chateaubriand et son groupe littéraire, sous l'empire, 2 vols., 1860; Causeries du lundi, 15 vols., 1851–1862; Nouveaux lundis, 13 vols., 1863–1869; Premiers lundis, 3 vols., published posthumously.

Criticism: D'Haussonville, Sainte-Beuve, sa vie et ses œuvres; Levallois, Sainte-Beuve; Brunetière, Évolution des genres, i. 217, and Poésie lyrique, i. 217; Sharp, Introduction to "Essays on Men and Women by C. A. Sainte-Beuve;" Taine, Nouveaux essais, p. 51.

the author apologized next year in a volume of "Consolations." One more volume of verse, "Les Pensées d'Août" (1837), completes his wooing of a refractory muse. He had not poetic imagination. Though he anticipated at times the popular note of Coppée and Manuel, there is something decidedly prosaic, commonplace, in the sentiments that he solemnly confesses at the first, and toys with to the last. Even in his poetry he is a critic of his own sensations, but these are not curious or rare enough to deserve such analysis. Still, if the "Poésies" and the "Pensées" were perhaps not worth printing, they were worth writing, for they contributed to make him one of the keenest analysts of moral nature, whether in men or in books. And doubtless they contributed essentially to the work he was afterward to accomplish for the enrichment of the French poetic vocabulary and the supple variety of its rhymes. He justified critically what Hugo had felt instinctively. The truest illustrations of his principles are not to be found in his own poems, but in the "Funambulesques" of Banville and the "Fleurs du mal" of Baudelaire.

In prose fiction Sainte-Beuve made but one essay, "Volupté" (1824). To him this form of expression proved as unsatisfactory and more laborious than verse itself. He heeded the admonition of his double failure, and devoted himself to pure criticism in lectures and literary reviews, while slowly elaborating his "History of Port Royal," a work for which his post as a Conservator of the Mazarin Library gave him both leisure and opportunity, till the Revolution of 1848 deprived him of this sinecure, and so led him to a brief professorship at the Belgian university of Liège which he made illustrious by his lectures on Chateaubriand, the first ripe

product of his genius. But in 1849 he returned to Paris and began the famous "Causeries du lundi," weekly critical articles in a conversational tone, that extended with some intermissions almost to his death, and give him his chief title to the grateful remembrance of all students of French literature. Though he was nominated a senator in 1865, he took but little interest in the politics of his time except in so far as they affected free thought. But this complete devotion to his profession in years of oppression and ferment earned him the dislike of the student body, and they drove him from his lectureship at the École Normale (1854). Gradually, however, his sturdy independence regained the esteem of that mobile body; and his funeral, on the eve of the Napoleonic collapse, became a popular liberal demonstration.

Sainte-Beuve has described his "Critiques et portraits," essays written before 1848, by the words "Youth painted youth." He felt that he had been too superlatively generous in his appreciation, especially of Hugo and his fellow Romanticists. Still, this earlier work had shown a constant progress in estimating contemporaries,[1] though some have thought that jealousy warped his judgments of the greatest writers of his own time, and it is certainly in his criticism of former generations that he is most sober and suggestive. But the great critic in him dates from 1849 and the "Causeries."

His popularity, his influence, and so his importance depended much on the novelty of his method. For the

[1] Matthew Arnold suggests the comparison of his undiscriminating praise of Hugo in 1831 with the keen dissection of 1835, where Hugo has become: "The Frank, energetic and subtle, who has mastered to perfection the technical and rhetorical resources of the Latin literature of the decadence."

dry-as-dust, mineral-cabinet process of Nisard, he substituted the "literary chat," the *causerie critique*, in which he might gather all the facts and anecdotes, however trivial, that would throw light on the author and his environment, and so explain the work that had grown from one as well as the other. Then, too, he looked always rather at merits than failures, at what a man was than at what he was not. A subjective critic naturally praises what pleases him. He is naturally tolerant of rising talent and of eccentric natures. He welcomes novelty just as the objective critic dreads it. The unclassified attracts the one; it repels the other. "What I sought in criticism," said Sainte-Beuve, "was to put in it a sort of charm, and at the same time more reality." He succeeded in both endeavors. He made criticism the most popular of the serious forms of literature, and he rescued it from its old intolerant artificiality forever.

Sainte-Beuve called himself a disciple of Bacon, by which he may have meant that books seemed to him inseparable from the men that wrote them, and equally dependent on moral and psychological conditions. Hence arose for him the necessity of a scientific study of character. He would aspire to do for man what Jussieu had done for plants and Cuvier for animals. Nothing human can be foreign to this collector of talents. He passes with easy flight from the gay to the demure, from the philosopher to the jester. Everywhere he finds the best and makes it his own. "He is the very personification of criticism considered as a science of sagacious analysis and at the same time as the most delicate of the arts." [1]

[1] Pellissier, Mouvement littéraire, p. 131, to whom I am indebted for other suggestions in this and the preceding paragraph.

Sainte-Beuve more than once calls his work "natural history," and himself "a naturalist of the mind." The use of these words may be fortuitous; but such terms, with "physiology," "surgery," and the like, mark the feeling that criticism had in it the possibilities of an exact science. Indeed he hoped that there would eventually be found in it something of the luminous life and order that presides over the distribution of botanical and zoölogical families. But to this critical science, of which he had a prophetic vision, he never himself attained, nor indeed seriously attempted it. He remained to the last essentially subjective. "Almost all a critic needs," he thinks, "is to know how to read a book, judging it as he reads, and never ceasing to enjoy," making his criticism, as he says in another place, "an emanation of books." But his idea of a science of criticism was soon to be developed with brilliant genius and rigid logic by Hippolyte Adolphe Taine.

Taine,[1] the theorist of Naturalism, was born just as the Romantic School was winning its first victories. Like his great contemporary Renan, he lost his father in early youth, and owed to the quiet home training of

[1] Born 1828; died 1892. His principal volumes are: Essai sur La Fontaine, 1853 (revised 1860); Essai sur Tite-Live, 1854; Philosophes français du xix. siècle, 1856; Essais de critique et d'histoire, 1857; Histoire de la littérature anglaise, 1864; Nouveaux essais, 1865; Philosophie d'art en Italie, 1866; Notes sur Paris (Thomas Graindorge), 1867; L'Idéal dans l'art, 1867; Philosophie d'art dans les Pays-Bas, 1868; De l'intelligence, 1870; Notes sur l'Angleterre, 1872; Origines de la France contemporaine (Ancien régime, 1876, Révolution, 1878-1884, Régime moderne, 1890, unfinished).

Critical essays on Taine may be found in Bourget, Essais de psychologie contemporaine, 175; Lemaître, Les Contemporains, iv. 169; Contemporary Review, April, 1893 (Gabriel Monod). Lanson, Littérature française, p. 1019, and Pellissier, Mouvement littéraire, p. 307, are both helpful though summary judgments.

his mother a devotion to study and truth for its own sake that never deserted him through life. He had intended to fit himself for a professorship, but even as a student at the École Normale he showed himself a thinker so independent and restive under its philosophic eclecticism that his examiners, regarding such talent as dangerous, tried to stifle it by a provincial appointment, which he promptly resigned. He seized the unforeseen leisure to supplement his philosophy by studies in medicine and natural science, and thus brought himself more in touch with the spirit of the rising generation. Hence it was that his early essays on La Fontaine, Livy, and the French Philosophers won immediate popularity, while his little account of a "Journey through the Pyrenees" (1855) showed his mastery of ordered and minute observation. It marked a scientific mind, and won him at the same time recognition in the republic of letters.

In 1864 the government that had thought him dangerous ten years before, made him professor in the École des Beaux Arts, a position to which we owe several series of lectures on the history of art that are models of philosophic criticism. In the same year he published his monumental "History of English Literature," applying the same principles in another field. But from his studies of literature and art he was diverted, by the collapse of the Empire and the disasters of his country in the "Terrible Year," to the philosophy of history; for he thought he saw in the sins and shortcomings of the old régime, in the Jacobins and in Bonaparte, the sufficient cause of all the woes of his native land. To show this in detail was the aim of the rest of his life and of the "Sources of Contemporary France," a work of immense erudition, bris-

tling with quotations, yet so systematized as to be almost mechanical in the logic of its development. He condemned the *ancien régime* as the true ancestor of Jacobinism, for the monarchy had so fostered its own successor and executioner that "one may regard its history as a long suicide." But he found the worst faults of the royalists repeated by the republicans, and reserved the bitterest vial of his wrath for the Corsican condottiere Bonaparte. Thus he alienated, by turns, the monarchists, the republicans, and the imperialists, while remaining through all the twenty years of this arduous study entirely consistent with the principles that had guided his whole scholarly life in history, philosophy, æsthetics, and literature; alike unmoved by popular clamor and indifferent to popular success.

These principles that underlie his whole work have exercised more influence on literature than his direct teaching has done. It is to those therefore, rather than to this, that one should first direct attention, for they are the philosophical basis of the pessimistic poetry and Naturalistic fiction that form so large a part of the literature of this half-century.[1]

If one attempts to realize the intellectual condition of France when Taine was graduated from the École Normale in 1853, its chief characteristic will appear to be a profound disillusionment. The Romantic movement was bankrupt, Ponsard's pseudo-classicism seemed a forlorn hope, Musset was drinking himself to death, De Vigny had withdrawn from letters into what Sainte-Beuve called his "tower of ivory," Lamartine and

[1] In what follows I have been guided in the main by the *arrangement* of Pellissier, though I am indebted in some measure to all the authors cited in the preceding note.

Gautier had turned perforce to prose, Hugo was in exile. The first dramatic successes of Dumas *fils* and Labiche were swallows that announced but did not make the Naturalistic summer,[1] and the novel was to remain for some years still where Balzac had left it on his death in 1850. In politics, too, reaction weighed on France. The *coup d'état* of 1851 had muzzled the press and the tribune, and would have been quite ready to muzzle the pulpit also, had it shown any quiver of independent life. Under these conditions the thought of France looked for its emancipation to the scientific spirit that made itself felt almost simultaneously in all branches of intellectual activity, in the high art of Meissonier and the low art of Forain, in the dramas of Dumas and Augier, in the poetry of the Parnassians, in the historical investigations of the philologist Renan, and presently in the novels of Flaubert and the Goncourt brothers. All these were equally penetrated with the analytic, meticulous spirit that found its chief nourishment in "suggestive little facts," that regarded the eclecticism of Cousin as outworn and the positivism of Comte as unreasonably positive, while they found their clearest and most uncompromising exponent in the author of the Essay on La Fontaine, the young graduate of the École Normale.

Science and poetry were not the same thing to them, but they felt that in the depths of the mind they would be found to have the same roots, that there was something common between them.[2] Hence they

[1] Labiche, Le Chapeau de paille d'Italie, 1851; Dumas *fils*, La Dame aux camélias, 1852.

[2] This is essentially the thought of Brunetière, Poésie lyrique, ii. 178.

conceived it to be one of the functions of art, if not its pre-eminent function and proper end, to manifest by its own peculiar means this primitive relation and these secret affinities. Herein lies the *raison d'être* of literary Naturalism, of which the fruitful truth will survive the vagaries of those vociferous novelistic advocates, who have, perhaps, least share of its spirit or comprehension of its nature.

No generation ever took more hopefully to heart that lofty promise, "The truth shall make you free;" but by "truth" they meant a minute study of phenomena. "The whole world," says Bourget, "seemed to Taine material for intellectual exploitation," or, as he puts it himself, "little facts, well chosen, important, significant, amply substantiated, minutely noted, such is, to-day, the material of every science,"—of psychology, in his view, quite as much as of chemistry. Hence his persistent attempt to make of psychology an exact science by introducing a determining element from physiology; hence, too, the ancillary disciplines of æsthetics and literary criticism are treated by him as exact sciences, capable of rigorous analysis and systematic deduction. Where Sainte-Beuve had sought to show how environment had influenced literature, Taine undertook to prove that it had caused it. His dogmatic assurance needed only to be reinforced by his vast reading, as in the "History of English Literature," to find its response in the educated thought of the younger generation in imperial France; and he presently found in the novelists a most zealous body of unsought allies in his psychological researches into what Zola has called "human documents." It is to his teaching, in the opinion of Bourget, that the minute observation of the modern artist is largely due. It is

to his impulse that we owe the multitude of "little note-books," the daily resort of Daudet and Zola in their effort to realize Taine's expectation that "the great dramatists and romancers should do for the present what historians do for the past."

But his system explains more in their work than the method of its composition. Any psychologist who depends on observation will almost of necessity seek the abnormal, the extreme manifestations of mind and character, for these are to him what the microscope is to the botanist; they show the laws of thought magnified, distorted perhaps, but more useful to his purpose; and so the typical naturalistic and psychological novelists are only following Taine when they deal by preference with the monstrosities or the exceptions, with moral or nervous disease, with the Germinie Lacertaux, the Lantiers, Claude and Etienne, the Larchers, and the Sidonies of society,[1] to whom their art can give a high relief without the infinite labor that Flaubert required to make an equal impression with his Monsieur Homais or his Charles Bovary.[2]

Still another result of this new experimental psychology is a shifting of moral standards. To a determinist like Taine, "there are causes for ambition, courage, veracity, as for digestion, muscular movement, and animal heat. Vice and virtue are products like vitriol and sugar;" and beneath the most cultured representative of Parisian society, if we unwrap his nature from the mummy-cloths of social and inherited restraint, we shall find everywhere and always "the

[1] Characters in E. and J. de Goncourt, Germinie Lacertaux; Zola, L'Œuvre, and L'Assommoir; Bourget, Mensonges and Psychologie de l'amour moderne; Daudet, Fromont jeune et Risler ainé.

[2] Both characters in Flaubert, Madame Bovary.

ferocious and lustful gorilla." But life and history when looked at from this determinist position tend inevitably to pessimistic submission to nature, and pessimistic Taine was to the core. Health, even reason itself, seems to him only "a happy accident," and he concludes that "the best fruit of science is cold resignation, for it pacifies and prepares the soul, so that our suffering is reduced to bodily pain." Most striking, too, is a passage on the Florentine Niobe, whom the sculptor has presented as her sons are falling beneath the celestial arrows of Apollo. "Cold and still she stands; hopeless, with eyes fixed on heaven, she contemplates with awe-struck horror the dazzling and deadly nimbus, the extended arms, the inevitable shafts, and the implacable serenity of the god." This is the mind that will exclaim as it looks down the vistas of time, "What a cemetery is history!"

Now let him apply these doctrines to literature and art. These, as he says in his "Philosophy of Art," manifest natural causes and fundamental laws in concrete terms of sense, addressing themselves not merely to reason, as science does by its deduction of exact formulæ and abstract terms, but to the hearts and senses of men. Thus they are at once more lofty and more popular; for they manifest what is highest, and manifest it to all. So all literary phenomena must be products, inevitable products; and their factors are race, historical and physical environment and momentum, or the tendency to perpetuation and evolution in already existing conditions. The whole of the elaborate "History of English Literature," from the harpers of "Beowulf" to the last "idle singer of an empty day," is intended as an illustration and proof of this theory. By it, too, he seeks to explain La

Fontaine and Racine, eliminating, surely beyond what present psychological accuracy of analysis will justify, that play of individual genius which has been called by Lanson "the inexplicable residuum." To Taine the poem is as much a product as the honeycomb, and he treats it like a naturalist. To use a happy figure of Pellissier (p. 307), he does not urge us to follow the example of the bee, or even to admire its skill; but he catches one, examines it, dissects it, scrutinizes the internal arrangement of the organs so as to fix its class, and then investigates by what method it gathers, elaborates, and changes pollen into honey. And so he and his school come to attach the greatest importance to form and to those laws of æsthetics that foster a purely impersonal objectivity. For, indeed, it is clear that Naturalism in literature is the logical and inevitable concomitant of the determinist philosophy, as Taine's study of Balzac seems to have convinced even Sainte-Beuve.

His method will be the same with the art of Greece and the Italian Renaissance as with the *genre* painters of the Dutch School. But here, as in literature, while he accounts admirably for the general characteristics of a nation or a period, he does not lay sufficient weight on the individuality of genius, — on what separates a Racine from a Pradon, a Rembrandt from a Breughl. And just as in psychology he was attracted by the exceptional and the extreme, because they promised a richer harvest of "significant little facts," so in literature and in art he is attracted by artists and authors who push one quality to its extreme rather than by those who show a rounded perfection. It is not with him a question of the good, or even primarily of the beautiful, in statue or poem; a wasp is as

interesting to the naturalist as the busiest of bees. To Taine the value of a work of art or of literature is in what it teaches, in the number of "essential, significant little facts" in regard to its object that it reproduces or reveals. This will be his primary classification. Secondarily, he will rank works of art or literature, according to their beneficence; that is, according to the result for mental health and pleasure on the spectator or reader. He puts last and in a wholly subordinate place what Gautier would have put first, — art for art's sake, the skill of the author in doing what he tries to do.

Taine's style is like the man and like his philosophy, grave, sincere, simple, and with rare exceptions serene. There is hardly a trace of irony, of straining for effect, or of deep enthusiasm, and there seems none at all of sentimentality or of mysticism. The man's character, and his work also, was essentially logical, almost mechanical, and in its finer moments architectural in its methodical upbuilding from phrase through paragraph and chapter to a unified structure in which each single stone has its designated place and function. He eschews the ornaments and freedom of a discursive style, allows himself few and brief digressions, relegating to the unessential what does not fit on the procrustean bed of his system. Add to this that his philosophy led him to deal almost wholly with the realities of sense, "the little facts," the grouping of which in ordered masses was one of the greatest triumphs of his genius. As one reads, one is drawn into a state of mind where each petty event seems the determining cause of others, where each group is linked to others, where each is effect and each is cause, while all contribute to the sign or idea that forms a part of

personality; where thought and the *ego* itself become but forms of molecular motion, induced by repeated sensations.

To the demonstration of such a philosophy this style is admirably adapted. All in it is development, all is swayed by determinism. There is nothing to startle, no sudden turns, no unexpected mental or moral shock; for though he will seek the solution of everything he will pass a moral judgment on nothing. Indeed he will guard himself as far as may be from "proscribing" or "pardoning" at all, although he thus eludes the end and purpose of true criticism, the definition of relative beauty by classification.

His is not the temper nor the style of a prophet, nor of a preacher, but of an expounder, a demonstrator, bent only on giving to each scene its true color and perspective, on placing each event or statue or book or picture in its exact relations of race, environment, and continuity of development. Oratorical he is, but it is the oratory of the bar, not of the pulpit; or, as Mr. Monod puts it, "his imagination is but the sumptuous raiment of his dialectic."

The fault of Taine's system, as has been already suggested, is that it rigidly and intentionally excludes a certain psychic element, "the inexpressible monad" of individuality, that many of his readers feel to be as real as any of his "little facts." So in literary criticism, which more immediately concerns us, while he begins with Sainte-Beuve he is apt to end with Nisard. He will seek, just as Sainte-Beuve would have done, the explanation of literary phenomena in environment, but he will order the facts so won after a preconceived system, where Sainte-Beuve would have judged them independently.

It was this logic, at once relentless and inadequate, that repelled the delicately tuned soul of Amiel. The reading of Taine, he said, "dried, corroded, saddened him." It had to him "the smell of the laboratory;" it never inspired, but only informed, and gave "algebra to those who asked life, the formula for the image, the heady fumes of distillation for the divine intoxication of Apollo." And yet this very rigidity has had a charm to many minds in all times, but especially in times like his, when the world-spirit, the *Zeitgeist*, returns like Noah's dove with weary wing to the ark of reality after vain soarings in Romantic ether, where it has perhaps found an olive-branch but no rest for the sole of its foot. It was the opportuneness of his system more than its depth that made him the guiding light to the intellectually productive men of France almost until his death. It is only in comparatively recent days that those who sought refuge from the waters of Romanticism in the Naturalistic ark have grown restless at its narrow horizon and have cast their lot with the raven, going to and fro over the earth, as disciples of the studiously unsystematic skepticism of Renan.

A greater contrast in birth, training, disposition, environment, and moral or literary influence can hardly be imagined than that which separates Hippolyte Taine from Ernest Renan, who in these latter days seems to have been more and more the chosen leader of French thought, or at least of its literary and critical expression, though perhaps it is inaccurate to apply the name "leader" to such a guide.

He was born[1] in the once monastic and modern

[1] Born 1823; died 1892. Averroès et Averroïsme, 1852. Collected essays: Études d'histoire religieuse, 1857; Essais de morale et de

fishing-village of Tréguier in Brittany, of Celtic stock that it has pleased some to connect with Saint Ronan of greater Britain. He lost his father in early youth, and owed it to the devotion of his sister that he was enabled to begin at the school of the local priests the studies for which his delicate health seemed to designate him. His brilliant progress made him a marked boy. He was invited by Dupanloup, the future archbishop, to his seminary in Paris, whence he was advanced to Saint-Sulpice, the chief training-school of the French priesthood, for which his masters reported "he was trying to have a vocation." But here his critical studies of the Scripture texts and works of German philosophy, surreptitiously furnished by his sister, gradually weakened his intellectual hold on the Catholic faith, though not his love for its beauty nor his warm regard for its worthy professors. At twenty-two he determined to abandon his study for orders, and his old patron Dupanloup magnanimously procured for him a Latin mastership in a clerical school.

critique, 1859; Questions contemporaines, 1868; Mélanges d'histoire et de voyages, 1878; Nouvelles études, 1884; Discours et conférences, 1887; L'Avenir de la science, 1890 (written in 1848). Church history: Vie de Jésus, 1863; Saint Paul et sa mission, 1867; L'Ante-Christ, 1873; Les Évangelistes, 1877; L'Église chrétienne, 1879; Marc-Aurèle, 1881, to which was added a *Table générale*, 1883, and later the introductory study: Histoire du Peuple Israel, 1888–1894 (5 vols.). Dramas: Caliban, L'Eau de Jouvence, Le Prêtre de Némi, Dialogue des morts, L'Abbesse de Jouarre, Le Jour de l'an, first collected as "Drames philosophiques" in 1888.

Criticism: Pellissier, l. c. p. 314; Lanson, l. c. p. 1069; Bourget, Essais de psychologie contemporaine, p. 35; Seailles, Ernest Renan. Nineteenth Century, June and July, 1881 (Myers); Contemporary Review, August, 1883 (Davies); Westminster Review, October, 1891 (Gleadell); Fortnightly Review, November, 1892; Contemporary Review, November, 1892 (Monod); Revue bleue, October, 1893 (Darmesteter). See also Lemaître, Contemporains, i. 193, iv. 245; France, La Vie littéraire, i. 422, ii. 317.

We know of these early years chiefly from his charming "Souvenirs" (1890) and their sequel, "Les Feuilles détachées" (1892). He was relieved by his sister's savings from pressing want, and his scholarship soon gave him an assured position. He was but twenty-five when he won his doctorate with high distinction; and already the Academy of Inscriptions had awarded him a prize for his "General History and Comparative Systems of the Semitic Languages." Another prize for an essay on the "Study of Greek in the Middle Ages" followed, in 1850. He was sent by the Academy to Italy, and published as the fruit of his studies there an epoch-making work on Arab philosophy. Again, in 1860, he was sent to Syria on an archæological mission, whence he returned with the conception of his "Life of Christ" (1863). Soon after he was elected to the chair of Hebrew in the Collège de France; but though this institution, by its foundation and its traditions, is independent of dogmatic influences, some expressions savoring of Unitarianism in his inaugural address, supplemented by the sensation caused by the "Vie de Jésus," excluded him from professorial functions during the Second Empire, a loss that was much more than counterbalanced by the wide circulation that the resulting popularity gave to his ideas. He had already printed noteworthy articles in the scholarly reviews, full of the enthusiastic conviction that politics, education, and ethics itself would be regenerated by the progress of science, and more especially by that of his own favorites, history and philology; but it was from the time of his suspended professorship and the "Life of Christ" that he began to exercise an influence beyond the circle of the learned. Of the "Vie de Jésus," whose captivating

beauty disguised a most powerful ethical solvent, more than 300,000 copies have been sold in France alone, and for every work that has followed there has been a popular as well as a professional demand, though it does not appear that Renan ever sacrificed anything that he held essential to a desire for fame.

The "Life of Jesus" was only the first of seven volumes dealing with the origins of Christianity during the period extending from the birth of Christ to the death of Marcus Aurelius, to which he afterward added an introductory "History of the Jews," his last important work. But this vast task by no means absorbed his philosophic interest. Besides important contributions to the huge "Literary History of France," begun by the Benedictines of a former century, he wrote a considerable number of Oriental studies and translations, and several curious "Philosophic Dramas" that contain the most daring of his speculations. The dispassionate calm of his mind was well illustrated at the time of the German war in two letters to David Strauss, the radical Biblical critic of Tübingen. In the first, he magnanimously recognizes his debt to German culture at a moment when France was feeling the weight of her conquering arms; in the second he vindicates for the conquered the superiority of French *esprit*. And later, also, his speech at his reception to the Academy (1879), and the "Letter to a Friend in Germany" that the discussion over it evoked, were remarkably free from any taint of chauvinism. During his last years he enjoyed all the honors, public and private, that Paris could bestow on her favorite scholar. He was made Grand Officer of the Legion of Honor and Administrator of the Collège de France, where he died, as he had wished, at his

post, October 2, 1892. This characteristic saying is recorded among his last words: "Let us submit to those natural laws of which we are one of the manifestations. Heaven and earth remain," — a sentiment that accords curiously with that recorded of the aged Goethe.[1]

Into the religious and philological controversies that raged around Renan's writings, and especially around his "Christian Origins," controversies whose volume is rivalled only by their acrimony, it is happily not our task to enter; but it is necessary to define, so far as it does not elude definition, what Renanism is, and what its effect has been on recent French literature.

Both Renan and Taine were determinists, and both were full of the scientific spirit. But what in the latter bred a mathematical dogmatism inspired in the other a cautious, indefinite, mystical, idealistic, ironical skepticism, with which there was a curious intermingling of romantic sentiment that fostered a joyous optimism, in strange contrast to Taine's gloom.[2]

Renan was, or at least took pains to seem, a smiling philosopher. He saw so many sides of truth, so many of its antinomies, that he was never quite sure of any definition, but he was sure of his own wit and genius, and was "the first to delight in Renanism."[3] "The world," he said, borrowing a simile from Heinrich Heine, "is a spectacle that God gives himself. Let us serve the aim of the grand stage-manager by contriving to make the spectacle as brilliant and varied as possible." In the same spirit he speaks of life as "a charm-

[1] Eckermann's Conversations, part iii., Oct. 8, 1827.

[2] Challemel Lacour said of him: "He thinks like a man, feels like a woman, and acts like a child," an epigram cited by nearly every writer on Renan. *Si non è vero è ben trovato.*

[3] Lemaître, Contemporains, i. 211.

ing promenade," and thinks the nineteenth century "the most amusing of ages" to one who like him regards it "with benevolent and universal irony." His joy is the intellectual delight of a favored critic who cares less for the play itself than for the scope that it gives to the display of his own genius. "One should write," said he, "only of what one loves," and in writing of religion he satisfied at once his critical and his mystical nature.

This combination leads to a dilettante spirit, the spirit that asks, "What is truth? and will not stay for an answer." Here all lofty conception of moral duty yields to the enjoyment of a beauty that seems its own excuse for being, while the true end of man becomes "to rise above the vulgarities in which common existence grovels." He has put this dilettante attitude very happily when he says, "God prefers the blasphemy of great minds to the selfish prayer of the vulgar; for though the blasphemy may imply an incomplete view of things, it contains an element of just protest, while egoism contains no particle of truth." And if one asks why God should be pleased with a protest against the order of his world, Renan will answer, as he did to the mourning Breton mother, that "God would like to prevent such things, but is not able yet."

Still, it might be hasty to call Renan frivolous or a Pyrrhonist. He could say proudly to the temptations of the Imperial Minister of Education, "Thy money perish with thee," and he asked that his epitaph might be *Veritatem dilexi*, "I have loved truth." He was in earnest when he said that he thought he was the only man of his time who had been able to comprehend Francis of Assisi, and avowed his belief that "religion is a product of the normal man, so that he who is most

religious and most assured of an infinite destiny is most true to his nature."[1] Again, in his "Souvenirs," he says: "I feel that my life is always governed by a faith I no longer possess. . . . It still lives by habit and sentiment. One continues to do mechanically what one once did in spirit and truth." And in this sense he declares that "few persons have a right not to believe in Christianity." So he counselled doubting priests to remain in the church, desired that children be brought up in it, and deplored the passing away of popular faith in France. He ordered his outward life according to Christian standards, and found serenity and consolation in the conviction that he was giving "electric shocks to people who would rather go to sleep," and laying the foundations of a Christianity purer than his contemporaries knew.[2]

The contradictions that puzzle many of his readers were entirely obvious to their author. He regarded himself as by nature "a tissue of contradictions . . . one half fated to be employed in destroying the other." "I do not complain," he adds, "for this moral constitution has procured me the keenest intellectual pleasure that man can enjoy." And again he says: "I am by nature double, one part of me laughs while the other weeps. . . . So there is always one part happy." Such citations could be multiplied indefinitely, for he was at no pains to avoid this paradoxical assertion of the uncertainty of metaphysical and ethical speculation, and felt humiliated that it should take him five or six years of the study of Semitic languages and German criti-

[1] L'Avenir religieux.

[2] See the prefaces to "Études d'histoire religieuse" and to "Essais de morale et de critique."

cism "to reach exactly the conclusion of the street gamin Gavroche."[1]

The key to these contradictions is the union in Renan of two races, the Breton and the Norman, and of two trainings, the ecclesiastical and the scientific, neither of which overcomes the other, while each by turns possesses his mind. Science is not moral, virtue is not scientific; but morality and virtue, the spirit of unselfishness and sacrifice, are a part of his idealism, another aspect of truth which he feels as essential to right living as any knowledge of phenomena with which to smaller minds it might seem in contradiction. No religion, according to him, has any basis in science. Intellectually Renan knows of "no free will superior to man's that acts in any cognizable manner," but yet he accepts all religions as good within their limits of idealism. Only the compromisers are an offence to him. He feels nearer to the Ultramontanes than to the Neo-Catholics. The result of this attitude is to draw a sharp line between the domains of science and faith. There can be no antagonism where there is no contact. Hence he has done the church of his youth a great service, among those who have comprehended him, by illustrating how a man may possess a faith that does not possess him,[2] and by opposing the unphilosophic attitude toward the church of Voltaire's "Écrasez l'infâme," that still sways the democratic masses of France. Here his influence has been most definite and most happy, for it has been a voice for religious peace and toleration.

Such views of philosophy and religion imply pride of intellect and a sense of superiority to his fellows, —

[1] For passages of similar tenor, see Bourget's essay, p. 62 sqq.

[2] The antithesis belongs to Anatole France.

in other words, an aristocratic temperament. He does not think the mass of mankind fit to enjoy his pleasures or hold his creed. He dreads democracy in society and politics.[1] "All civilization is the work of aristocrats," says the Prior in "Caliban," and in the same play Prospero thinks labor should be the serf of thought, though "democrats find the doctrine monstrous." "*Noli me tangere* is all we can ask of democracy," he says elsewhere; and he shudders at the Americanizing of society, to countervail which he dreams of an intellectual oligarchy who shall so hold in their sole control the still unguessed forces of science that they "will reign by absolute terror, because they will have the existence of all in their hands." This aristocratic spirit appears also in the contemptuous irony of his suggestion that Flaubert's Homais, the typical provincial philistine, may after all be the best theologian; and it is this that gives its sting to his dissection of Béranger's convivial prayer, where glass in hand the poet begs his lady-love to

> Lever les yeux vers ce monde invisible,
> Où pour toujours nous nous réunissons,

as a melancholy proof of the "incurable religious mediocrity" of France.[2]

But whether Renan is a dilettante, a mystic, or an aristocrat, he is always a fascinating writer to the thoughtful. His style is like his mind, subtle, sinuous, apparently clear, and yet escaping the ultimate analysis and eluding the appreciation of ordinary readers, who miss such ornaments of diction as arrest their attention

[1] See "Caliban," "Eau de Jouvence," and "Réforme intellectuelle et morale," this last written in view of the disasters of 1871.

[2] Questions contemporaines, p. 467.

in Hugo and Michelet. The greater number admire him for his skill in saving sentiment to their lack of faith, but choice spirits discern in him one of the greatest and most varied masters of French in this century. A distinguished critic, Mr. Saintsbury, has called his style "a direct descendant of that of Rousseau through Chateaubriand," but its charm seems rather to lie in a peculiar vague suggestiveness and spirituality. Even from a purely formal side it shows less affinity with these writers than with the Hebrew Scriptures and the Latin and Greek classics, while in its vocabulary, except perhaps in the latest pieces, it is severely simple and restrained. But he manipulates these limited resources with such skill that rhythm, metaphor, and direct description always seem to contain more than meets the ear, their outlines dissolving, as some critic has delicately said, like those of Corot's landscapes, till they seem a realization of Verlaine's aspiration: "O! la nuance, seule fiance." Bourget cites a passage from Renan's essay on Celtic poetry that is at once an example and a description: —

> Jamais on n'a savouré assez longuement ces voluptés de la conscience, ces réminiscences poétiques, où se croisent à la fois toutes les sensations de la vie, si vagues, si profondes, si pénétrantes, que, pour peu qu'elles vinssent à se prolonger, on en mourrait, sans qu'on pût dire si c'est d'amertume ou de douceur.

Such phrases as "voluptés de la conscience" and their delicate definition as "reminiscences at once vague and deep and searching and overpowering, and yet neither sweet nor bitter," should show how far Renan is from being a direct descendant of Rousseau.

Renan's influence is at present the strongest single

element in French literature. "In him more than in any of his contemporaries," says Mr. Monod, "breathed the soul of modern France." To him is directly due the reawakening of religious curiosity, which leads to such analyses as Daudet's "L'Évangeliste" and "La Petite paroisse," as Bourget's "Nouveaux pastels," and Huysmans' "En route." But it owes less to any teaching of his than to the example of his dilettantism, which in his imitators becomes a skeptical power of varied enjoyment of the results of a previous, positive, creative period. Doubtless Renan is not the originator of this "state of soul" which is the natural result of the overwhelming complexity of Parisian civilization, but his peculiar training made him its ablest and frankest exponent, and so he has become a leader, a prophet, to many in this perplexed *fin de siècle*, which shrinks with the dread of old experience from what one of its ablest essayists calls "the horrible mania of certainty." French thought, or at least French criticism, seems "weary of all except of understanding."[1] It finds its satisfaction only in protean inconsistency, that supplies ever new and changing points of view. It denies the supernatural with easy tolerance, born of a conviction that no faith is worth a struggle, much less a martyrdom.

It is therefore no favorable sign that so much of the best talent of France should turn to criticism. Never in its history has systematic criticism been more rigorously dogmatic, or psychological criticism shown more exquisite power of appreciation, than now, and never has critical work been followed with so much interest or met with such reward. A volume of psy-

[1] Bourget, Essais, 61, attributes this sentiment to Virgil in a similar period of Latin culture.

chological studies in literature established the fame of Bourget; the weekly articles of Sarcey, France, and Lemaître are literary events; the scholarly conferences of Brunetière hold the close attention of crowded lecture rooms; and these are but the first among many equals.[1]

Among the immediate followers of Taine, Zola alone showed great force or originality as a critic, though he is much more dogmatic than judicious, and is far from practising in his novels the theories that he advocates in his critical essays.[2] Also related to Taine, though fundamentally antagonistic to Zola, is Brunetière. He shares with Zola Taine's objectivity and pessimism; but he adds to this a logical synthesis that Zola, as a critic, does not possess. This, with his delicate taste and a learning alike minute and immense, borne lightly by a style that is always keen and cutting and sometimes superciliously contemptuous, has made him more popular with the public than with his fellow critics.[3] He is the most thoroughgoing of critical evolutionists,

[1] It would be unjust not to name, though but in foot-note, Émile Faguet (born 1847), editor of the "Classiques populaires" and author of a series of critical studies of the chief writers of the sixteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. Among younger men, E. Rod, G. Pellissier, author of the perspicuous "Mouvement littéraire au xix. siècle," and several volumes of literary essays, and G. Lanson, whose "Histoire de la littérature française" is one of the best popular literary histories in any language, deserve special notice.

[2] Especially, Le Roman expérimental, 1880; Les Romanciers naturalistes, 1881; Le Naturalisme au théâtre, 1881.

[3] Born 1849. Principal works: Histoire et littérature, 3 series, 1884, 1885, 1886; Études critiques, 5 series, 1880; Nouvelles questions de critique, 1890; Le Roman naturaliste, 1883; L'Évolution des genres, 1890; sqq. Les Époques du théâtre, L'Évolution de la poésie lyrique. He is editor in chief of the "Revue des deux mondes." On the character of Brunetière's criticism, see Lemaître, Contemporains, i. 217; Lanson, Littérature française, 1081; Revue de Paris, February, 1894.

more intent on "classifying, weighing, comparing, than on enjoying or helping others to enjoy" (Lemaître). His great work has been to re-establish a truer perspective between the Classicists, the eighteenth century, the Romanticists and the present age. Throughout he sees only the natural evolution of literary tradition; and while he mocks unsparingly the exaggerated pretensions of the Naturalists, he recognizes "the justification of a movement that has been drawing our writers for some years back from the cloudy summits of old-time Romanticism to the level plains of reality." Indeed, it should be in the nature of such a critic to explain rather than to judge, though Brunetière has been constrained to give a freer scope to individuality in genius than accorded with the system of Taine, and allows himself, while pursuing his undeviating way, to shoot many barbed arrows to right and left, especially at Messieurs Zola and Goncourt, that cannot but arouse unnecessary rancor.

More avowedly subjective, more in the spirit of Renan, is Jules Lemaître,[1] who began his career as a Parnassian poet, and won his first critical successes in 1884 by essays on Renan, Zola, and Ohnet.[2] His critical style is pregnant and witty, supple and ironical, vivacious and picturesque, frequently suggesting Renan, with whose temperament and conception of life he felt a strong affinity. Thus he, too, makes no effort to be

[1] Born 1853. Critical essays: Les Contemporains, 5 vols., 1886, sqq. Impressions de théâtre, 8 vols., 1888, sqq. Collected tales: Sérénus, 1886; Dix contes, 1891; Les Rois, 1893. Dramas: Révoltée, 1889; Député Leveau, 1890; Mariage blanc, 1891; Flipote, 1893; Myrrha, 1894; Le Pardon, 1895.

[2] "Depuis l'article de M. Lemaître, bien des gens continuent de lire M. Ohnet, mais on ne trouve plus personne qui s'en vante." Lanson, p. 1082.

systematic, nor is he anxious for rigid consistency. Criticism, he has said, is "a representation of the world, like other branches of literature, and hence by its nature as relative, as vain, and therefore as interesting as they."

But the full flower of critical Renanism may be seen in Anatole France,[1] who, like Lemaître, began his literary career as a Parnassian, and has achieved some distinction in fiction by his delicately critical analysis of passion, at first playfully tender in its irony, but later, under the influence of his critical antagonism to Brunetière, growing keener, stronger, and more bitter. In "Thaïs" he has undertaken to show the bond of sympathy that unites the pessimistic skeptic to the Christian ascetic, since both despise the world; in "Lys rouge" he traces the perilously narrow line that separates love from hate; and in "Jérôme Cogniard" he has given us "the most radical breviary of skepticism that has appeared since Montaigne." All this is far more the fiction of a critic than of a romancer. They are essays in Renanism. He says himself that "criticism is a sort of novel for the use of circumspect and curious minds," since in his view both are essentially autobiographical. "There is no objective criticism any more than there is an objective art. . . . To be perfectly frank the critic should say, Gentlemen, I propose to talk about myself with regard to Shakspere, Racine, Pascal, Goethe."

Hence criticism appears to Anatole France the most recent and possibly the ultimate evolution of literary

[1] Born 1844. Principal works — Critical: La Vie littéraire, 2 vols. 1888, 1890. (The greater part of his journalistic reviews are uncollected). Philosophy: Le Jardin d'Épicure, 1894. Fiction: Crime de Silvestre Bonnard, 1881; Thaïs, 1890; Les Opinions de Jérôme Cogniard, 1893; Lys rouge, 1894.

expression, "admirably suited to a highly civilized society, rich in souvenirs and old traditions. It proceeds from philosophy and history, and demands for its development an absolute intellectual liberty. It takes the place of theology. The universal doctor, the Thomas Aquinas of the nineteenth century, is Sainte-Beuve." "Criticism is the last in date of all literary forms, and it will end by absorbing them all."[1]

Anatole France is an ideal representative of the dilettante spirit, combining in his style, as Lemaître remarks, traces of Racine, Voltaire, Flaubert, and Renan, but so individualized as to become "perfection in grace, the extreme flowering of the Latin genius." Meantime the mystic side of Renanism finds its expression in Charles Morice,[2] the obscure critic of Symbolism; and while each of these — Brunetière, Lemaître, France, Morice, — addresses his little cultured company, the great mass of the reading and theatre-going public still bows beneath the philistine sceptre of Francisque Sarcey.[3]

[1] Vie littéraire, i., Preface (condensed).

[2] La Littérature de tout à l'heure, 1889.

[3] Born 1828; journalist since 1858. That his articles have not been republished in book form has contributed to prolong his authority.

CHAPTER IX.

THE EVOLUTION OF LYRIC POETRY.[1]

THERE is a sense in which Hugo is the father of modern French poetry, but his descendants have been less dutiful than admiring, so that, as has been already said, he seems rather to bar the current of poetic evolution than to divert or guide it. Hugo's poetic children bear the print of his outward features, but they do not inherit his hopeful courage. Much of their work is of great beauty, and its remarkable variety is of significance in any effort to comprehend the past and to foreshadow the near future of French literary genius and intellectual life. Yet through all or almost all of their writing we may trace beneath the mask of Hugo's rhetoric and prosody the spirit of Sainte-Beuve and Taine. Pessimism, violent, gloomy, sad, or frivolous and hedonistic, is the colored thread that runs through the warp and woof of *fin de siècle* verse, both among the Parnassian artists for art and in the decadent or deliquescent schools of Symbolism.

The first lyric expression of Romanticism had been fundamentally egoistic and individualized. This is characteristic of Lamartine, of Hugo, and of De Musset. But as the movement spent its first force, two divergent tendencies checked and modified its self-confident liberty. First, the socialistic theories that we connect

[1] This chapter has appeared without essential omissions in "The Sewanee Review," May and November, 1895.

with the names of Fourier and Saint-Simon undermined the political basis of individualism. A discontented or at least a restless mental state succeeded to the hopeful energy of 1830 after the collapse of the Republic of 1848. This generous discontent found its reflection in the sombre, self-centred, yet purposeful poetry of De Vigny. On the other hand, the æsthetic liberties of the Romanticists, the wanton gambols of individualism in metre and language, led inevitably to a reaction; and the exaggerated appreciation of poetic form found its completest expression in Gautier.

These two forces acted together or apart on all forms of literature, but in prose fiction they were for a time dominated by the genius of Balzac and by the scientific determinism or skepticism of Taine and Renan, and in the drama their action is obscured, at least in the strongest work, by the subordination of art to social ethics. The two tendencies appear most plainly in poetry, where the traditions of De Vigny are nobly upborne by the Parnassians, while in Banville one can already trace the incipient decadence toward art for artificiality of the school of Gautier, the labored futility of whose poetry Banville best reflects in the substance of his verses, though in outward form and rhyme he illustrates and elaborates the theories of Sainte-Beuve.

In a posthumous essay Banville has described himself as a follower of the Graces of old Greece, while the contemporaries of his later years seemed to him worshippers of the newer graces, Absinthe, Nevrose, and Morphine. In claiming this classical affiliation the poet wished to class himself with those Parnassians who took Hugo for their master in prosody and rhetorical form, while in their hedonistic ethics and in their

passionless objectivity they followed Gautier. The very titles of his earlier volumes [1] suggest their impassive nature. From the very outset he appears as a poet of a disillusioned age, a product of the corroding spirit of determinism in philosophy and the cynical materialism of the Second Empire. He shows no faith save in his senses and the joy they bring, the delight of eye and ear, the harmony of color and sound. He suffered neither anxious thought nor unreasoning passion to ruffle his serene calm.

Like Gautier, Banville wrote a great mass of critical but ephemeral feuilletons, some equally ephemeral dramas, and an essay on prosody that won him the title "Legislator of Parnassus." He wrote also many prose tales; but the best of these ring false in spite of their melodious warmth, and the laxity of their morals mars the delicate grace of their style, for there is a violation of essential congruity when the characters of the "Comédie humaine" are dressed in fairy gauze. But it is as a poet alone that Banville survives, and it is his poetry alone that merits special study. We should expect of one who schools himself to hide the emotions that survive his philosophy that the lyric note of personal experience would be subordinated to the feelings common to humanity or to descriptive reproductions of nature and legend as they

[1] Banville was born 1823 and died 1891. Œuvres, 8 vols., 1873–1878, and Dernières poésies, 1893. Chronology of the chief collections: Cariatides, 1842; Stalactites, 1846; Odelettes, 1856; Odes funambulesques, 1857; Nouvelles odes funambulesques, 1869; Idyles prussiennes, 1871. Dramas: Gringoire, 1866; Socrate et sa femme, 1885. Fiction: Contes féeriques; Esquisses parisiennes, scènes de la vie, 1859. Criticism: Traité de la poésie française, 1872. Critical articles on Banville: Spronck, Les Artistes littéraires, p. 299; Lemaitre, Contemporains, i. 7; and Nineteenth Century, August, 1891.

appear in the posthumous poems of De Vigny. But in Banville the substance tends more and more with each succeeding collection to become subordinate to form, more and more rhyme becomes the chosen field for the display of his virtuosity. He revives the artificial stanzas of the fourteenth century, the rondeau, the triolet, and the rest, and even betters the instruction, dancing in his "Odes funambulesques," true "Tight-rope Odes," on the wire he has stretched for his muse, with an easy assurance that arouses a sort of amused admiration for these trifling *odelettes*, frivolous and fanciful, yet in their kind of great excellence.

It is no small thing in an age sicklied o'er with Naturalism to preserve an inexhaustible flow of gayety, though it be empty, — to write, as Lemaître wittily puts it, with the one idea of expressing no idea. Banville confesses ingenuously that his ambition is to ally the buffoon element to the lyric, while rigorously adhering to the form of the ode, and to obtain, as in a true lyric, his impression, comic or otherwise, by combinations of rhymes and harmonious or peculiar effects of sound. He is convinced that the musical effect of verse can awaken what it will in the reader's mind, "and even create that supernatural and divine thing, laughter," as well as "joy, enthusiastic emotion, and beauty." Thus he approaches Wagner's theory of a music drama, though our poet is more modest in his aspirations, and indeed only carries to its extreme a device practised in all ages of French verse, — by Villon as well as Piron, and by none more than by his favorite Ronsard.

The gift of musical speech was his from the first. Several poems of his youthful "Cariatides" sing them-

selves into the ear with strange melody,[1] and others among his satiric verses have a curious metallic quality that foreshadows his future mastery.[2] But the elaboration of many of the later *chants royaux* and *virelais* must always be caviare to most readers. In these wrestlings between the subject and the intricate rhyme, the former, even if like Jacob it come off victor, is almost sure to have a sinew shrivelled in the contest. Yet it is interesting to note that while this will-o'-the-wisp rhyme is leading the poet's fancy where it will, the very phantasmagoria that it evokes have their charm. Our curiosity is excited as we watch the poet winding himself out of his own labyrinth; yes, this very difficulty gives a fillip to his own imagination, and at times reveals to him unexpected flowers of preciosity.

Such an art of poetry is hardly adapted to serious subjects of any kind. His satires are mocking *vers de société* or laments that pleasures must be bought that should be given.[3] Often his thought takes the form of parody of some popular piece or style; or, perhaps, like some busy bee of humor, he builds an elaborate fabric of formal nonsense where the wit lurks in grotesque juxtapositions, fantastic figures, serious verses upset by some impertinent bit of slang, the promise of wisdom ending in ludicrous commonplace, all clothed in teasing rhymes and lit up with countless puns. Twice only was Banville betrayed into serious emotion, not much to his poetic advantage. Toward the close of the Empire the counsellors of Napoleon were made the butts for the poisoned darts of his satire, and during the

[1] E. g., "Confession," and the second part of the "Songe d'hiver."

[2] E. g., The sixth part of "Ceux qui meurent et ceux qui combattent."

[3] E. g., La Malédiction de Vénus.

siege of Paris the bitterness of unreasoning hate overflowed in his "Idylles prussiennes." But in his normal mood Banville much prefers Greek mythology to modern politics,[1] and finds his favorite subjects in the Renaissance or in the picturesque aspects of literary and artistic Bohemia. The gayety of nocturnal Paris tricked out in gauzy spangles has also its charm for him; and so indeed has anything that is quite aside from the every-day life and duties of Philistia, for which, as for its laureate Scribe, he had a deep and life-long aversion.

Here he is most at home, and paints exquisite pictures whose clear-cut outlines rival the brilliancy of their color, whose every phrase thrills with the joy of art and beauty.[2] He is more the artist for art than even Gautier, for he has not a trace of that *arrière pensée* of death that haunts the mediævalized mind of the author of "Albertus." Indeed, Banville is the most thorough pagan of all the moderns, light-hearted even to his septuagenarian end, and leaving behind him as the sum of his ephemeral wisdom the beneficent lines:

> La planète est vieille, mais
> Comme la jeune fille est jeune.

[1] E. g., La Voie lactée, Clymène, Le Jugement de Paris. The last is the most elaborate, but all are frigid.

[2] E. g., among descriptive pieces, L'Exil des dieux, Le Banquet des dieux, Le Sanglier, La Mort d'amour, La Fleur de sang, La Rose; among the humorous and gay, Eldorado, En Habit zinzolin, and the Odelette à Méry; as a model of metrical art, the last four lines of "Carmen": —

> Il faut à l'hexamètre, ainsi qu'aux purs arceaux
> Des églises du nord et des palais arabes,
> Le calme pour pouvoir dérouler les anneaux
> Saints et mystérieux de ses douze syllabes.

Noteworthy also are the ten lines that immediately follow, beginning:

> Nous n'irons plus aux bois, les lauriers sont coupés.

Banville's easy cheerfulness, his unruffled optimism that persistently closed its eyes to more than half of life, will account for the comparative neglect of his verses in a time more conscious of its faults than of its power to overcome them, an age that found truer representatives of the nobler aspects of its pessimism in the Parnassians and a more intense expression of its morbid decadent tendencies in Banville's unfortunate friend Charles Baudelaire, the progenitor of the latter Symbolists, who represent a state of weary yet restless reaction from the confidence of scientific determinism, to which the Parnassians oppose the dignified reserve and stoic calm of the philosophic mind. These, therefore, are the result in poetry of an earlier phase of the national spirit, and for this as well as for their intrinsic qualities they have the first claim to our attention.

It is curious and possibly significant that two of the chief Parnassians are not French by birth, and one of them not even by descent. Leconte de Lisle, though older than either Banville or Baudelaire, was born in the island colony of Réunion, and did not remove permanently to France till 1847, where he at first threw himself into the Republican agitation with much ardor, and so began his literary career later than they after his political hopes had been dashed by the *coup d'état*.[1] His "Poèmes antiques" were not published till 1853,

[1] He died in 1894. French criticism of his work may be found in Pellissier's Mouvement littéraire, p. 282; in Lanson's Littérature française, p. 1036; in Brunetière's Poésie lyrique and Littérature contemporaine; in France, Vie littéraire, i. 95, and Lemaître, Contemporains, ii. 5. All these have been consulted in the preparation of this essay. Cp. also Jean Dornis, Leconte de Lisle intime, in Revue des deux mondes, May, 1895, and Paul Monceaux in Revue bleue, June, 1895. The posthumous "Derniers poèmes" (1895), with interesting literary essays on his lyric predecessors appeared too late to be used here.

when the position of Banville was already secure. His own ascent of Parnassus was more laborious. As late as 1867 he could secure but two votes in an election to the Academy that resulted in the choice of Sardou, and it was not till 1886 that he entered that body, taking the seat made illustrious by Victor Hugo, who had been one of the two to favor his former candidacy.

Meantime his literary baggage had been enlarged by "Poèmes et poésies" (1855), "Poèmes barbares" (1859 and 1862), and "Poèmes tragiques" (1884). He had distinguished himself also by admirable translations of Theocritus and Anacreon, Hesiod, Homer, Sophocles, and Æschylus, studies from which he drew much of his own exquisite culture. He had essayed Horace also, had practised his pen in criticism, and had written two books of a decidedly radical tendency, a popular History of Christianity and a Republican Catechism, which it is but just to say were both published anonymously. But whatever might be the spirit of his politics, into his poetry he carried always the temper of a scholar and a lover of the classic poets, from whom he learned that objectivity which enabled him before the publication of Hugo's "Legend of the Centuries" to nurse the failing sense for epic poetry in France, while at the same time it marked his opposition both to the Romantic School in general and to its rebellious offspring, Baudelaire, though it is shared in a measure by De Vigny and Gautier. Resembling Banville in his preference for classical themes, he differs wholly from him in the serious purpose and scientific undercurrent of his verse. "Art and science," he says in his preface to the "Poèmes antiques," "have long been separated. Now they should tend to unite closely if not to mingle. The

one has been the primitive revelation of the ideal as contained in external nature; the other has been its rational study and luminous exposition. But art has lost that intuitive spontaneity, or rather it has exhausted it. Science has for its office to reveal to art the sense of its forgotten traditions, which it can then revive in artistic form." In other words, to Leconte de Lisle and to the Parnassians who follow him, poetry should be naturalistic. But he makes an important reserve, for elsewhere he says: "The beautiful is not the servant of the true, for it contains the truth, human and divine." And again he has written: "None possesses poetry who is not exclusively possessed by it." This, then, is his philosophy of his art, and it is in this sense only that he regards that art as an end in itself. For he is no juggler with words, still less with symbolic impressions. He has always a definite image before his poet's eye, a definite purpose in his mind, which is indeed no meaner aim than to show the gradual unfolding of the ideal life in the human mind, to trace the tentative reachings of religious thought into the legendary past and hidden future of the race.

Such philosophic calm was a refreshing novelty in 1853. Men called him "First of the Impassives." Not that he did not feel, and keenly, — that no reader of "Manchy" or of "L'Illusion suprême"[1] could fail to perceive, — but that he consistently repressed his feeling. He protested, both by precept and example, against the "professional use of tears," the "cry of the heart," and such like Romantic devices. For all subjectivity that could not be purified of its egoism was to him a corruption and cheapening of art, while

[1] Barbares, p. 190; Tragiques, 36. The pages are from the 16mo edition.

a great poet and an irreproachable artist seemed to him "identical terms."[1] Hence, though he would have hesitated at Flaubert's oracle, "The idea is born of form," he naturally gave more heed to the chastened perfection of his prosody than the Romanticists, while allowing his verses less freedom than Banville. They are, indeed, the most regular of the period, for the most part classic alexandrines after Boileau's heart, or, if the Romantic type of that verse appear, it will be in its simplest form. His rhymes, too, are stately, though usually rich and often rare. In this, as in his style, he approaches the splendid brilliancy of Hugo, while nearly attaining the clean-cut cameos of Gautier. But his precision, his self-possession, his perfect control of all the processes of poetic art, inspire in the general reader respectful admiration rather than hearty sympathy, and make him particularly the poet's poet.

In his philosophy this student of religions is as pessimistic, as skeptical, as Baudelaire or De Vigny.[2] He makes his Cain — or "Qain," as the name is spelled in recent editions — bid defiance to his Judge in these words: —

> Thou sad, thou jealous God, who veilest thy face,
> Thou lying God who saidst thy work was good,
> My breath, thou moulder of the antique clay,
> Some day shall rouse thy victim quivering.
> Thou shalt say, Pray! and he shall answer, No.[3]

[1] Cp. Les Montreurs (Barbares, p. 222), but also Brunetière, Poésie lyrique, ii. 156–163.

[2] Cp. Le Vœu suprême, Aux morts, and Aux modernes (Barbares, pp. 219, 232, 356).

[3] It is said that only the intercessions of De Heredia rescued this poem from the flames. The lines cited are: —

> Dieu triste, dieu jaloux, qui dérobes ta face,
> Dieu qui mentais, disant que ton œuvre était bon,
> Mon souffle, o pétrisseur de l'antique limon,
> Un jour redressera ta victime vivace,
> Tu lui diras, Adore; Elle répondra, Non. (Barbares, p. 18.)

Like Lucretius, his study of religions has not made him love religion. Like Gautier, his only divinity is beauty, and to the very last,[1] as we should expect in the classical scholar, it is plastic beauty, beauty of form that most appeals to him, though there are occasional notes of noble patriotism, among which the "Sacre de Paris" (Tragiques, 76) is most memorable. His interest in religious manifestations is really the interest of revolt. For all his apparent calmness, he is militant at bottom, thoroughly in touch with the restless skepticism of an epoch that is seeking a new basis for ethics, and, because it finds none, is forcing itself ever to renew its conviction of the insufficiency of the old moral sanctions by striving to realize in poetic fancy the various solutions that mankind has conceived for the eternal problem of life.

He brings to this task a spirit repelled by the philistine egoism of Parisian society, and fascinated by the overpowering forces of Nature as he has seen her in his native tropics. So he comes to look on life as a struggle between the soul and the earth-spirit, in the body and in the world. Thus impressed and oppressed by "the magnificent indifference" of the powers that sway the world, he says of Nature: —

> For him who knows to penetrate thy paths,
> Illusion wraps thee, and thy surface lies!
> Beneath thy furies, as beneath thy joys,
> Thy force is without rapture, without rage.[2]

[1] The last strophe of "Sacrifice," written but a few days before his death, shows the same unconquerable mind as "Dies Iræ": —

> Mais si le ciel est vide, et s'il n'est plus de dieux
> L'amère volupté de souffrir reste encore,
> Et je voudrais, le cœur abîmé dans ses yeux [i. e. of beauty]
> Baigner de tout mon sang l'autel où je l'adore.

[2] La Ravine de Saint-Gilles. The lines cited are: —

> Pour qui sait pénétrer, Nature, dans tes voies,
> *L'illusion* t'enserre et ta surface ment!

His study of history casts a shadow of deeper discouragement on his vision of life; but he finds in it the distraction that Lucretius found in watching the sea-fight from the hill, recovering his serenity in the contemplation of far-off suffering, and relief from the puzzle of his own life in the cyclopean struggles of his giant city, Henokia, where Cain rises from his tomb to justify his rebellion by making God the author of his crime, and declares that he will avenge himself by preserving mankind from the threatened destruction of the deluge, and by aiding them to shake off the dominion of "thy priests, wolves with ravening jaws, gorged with fat of men, and thin with rage," until the hour shall come when Cain foresees that "God shall annihilate himself in his sterility." This "protest," as a French critic has called it, "of the body against pain, the heart against injustice, and reason against the unintelligible," has naturally suggested to many the Prometheus of Æschylus and the "Graius homo" of Lucretius (i. 66). But in our day the contradictions of nature have become more acute, its antinomies more obvious, and the need of a solution urges itself more imperiously on the human heart, as science enlarges the borders of our knowledge and nourishes our intellectual pride. And so it is fitting that "Cain"

> Au fond de tes fureurs, comme au fond de tes joies,
> Ta force est sans ivresse et sans emportement.
> (Poèmes barbares, p. 176.)

Compare "La Forêt vierge;" "La Fontaine aux lianes;" "La Panthère noire;" "Le Jaguar," parts of which resemble very closely the noted "Löwenritt" of Freiligrath; Les Éléphants (Barbares, pp. 186, 136, 198, 208, 183); Midi (Antiques, p. 292). In "Effet de lune" and "Les Hurleurs" (Barbares, pp. 211, 172) Nature is a destroyer. Rarely she shows a milder face, as in "Claires de lune" and "Bernica" (Barbares, pp. 178, 205); still more rarely her sublimity, as in "Sommeil du condor" (Barbares, p. 193).

should be elaborated with all that archæology and anthropology have to teach of primitive man.

Other poems in this connection deal with heathen and Hellenic legends, and many of them show the same curious preoccupation with death that haunted Gautier and Baudelaire. Such titles as "Dies Iræ," "Solvet Sæclum," "Les Spectres," "Fiat Nox," "Mort du soleil," "Aux morts,"[1] sufficiently suggest the nature of these lugubriously beautiful aspirations toward Nirvana. "O divine Death," exclaims the poet, "deliver us from time, number, space; give us back the repose that life has troubled."[2] One cannot repress a little smile of irony as one pictures Leconte de Lisle at his desk filing these verses, and living on, toying with despair.

From the primeval man and Hebrew tradition the poet turns to the more sympathetic mysticism of India. Indeed, impelled perhaps by the disappointment of his political hopes and by his religious disillusionment, he has confessed his attachment to Buddhism and its contemplative founder, some part of whose esoteric philosophy has passed into the "Vision de Brahma," and the "Baghavat," though "Çunacepa" takes us back to the still more primitive philosophy that it is not the love of Nirvana but the love of youth and maid that gives the greatest impulse to effort and sacrifice.

In passing from India to Greece, De Lisle finds freer action and greater beauty, but a moral horizon

[1] Antiques, p. 309; Barbares, pp. 361, 241, 237, 240, 232.

[2] Et toi, divine Mort . . .
Affranchis-nous du temps, du nombre, de l'espace
Et rends-nous le répos que la vie a troublé.
(Dies Iræ, Antiques, p. 311.)

always fatalistic, bounded by the grave, and saved only from melancholy speculation by national glory and personal activity. So he paints them in their myths and their worship of beauty. In two dramas, whose stately simplicity suggests and almost rivals that of Æschylus, he has told the tales of Helen and Orestes. Briefer pieces recount the hapless daring of Khiron, overbold to conceive gods better than the Olympians, and of Niobe, who mourned the vanquished Titans. Others are pure idyls of beauty suggesting Theocritus in all but his unrivalled naïveté.[1] But Nature to him is always forceful, dominant, overcoming man and his works, not the kindly nurturing mother of the classic poets.

From Greece we are borne to a field as different from it as the Ganges. The Great Migration inspires pictures of fierce energy and passion,[2] and the weird mythology of the Elder Edda, as told in his legend of the Nornes, serves as the psychological preparation for the ascetic teaching of the early Christian missionaries. Everywhere, from Iceland to the Ganges, the poet had found that reflection led men to puzzled dissatisfaction with the course of the world; but nowhere did he find life held a less precious gift than by the race that produced the "Bard of Temrah" and invited the "Massacre of Mona."[3]

Of all the world-philosophies the mediæval Christian system is least sympathetic to Leconte de Lisle,[4] perhaps because he sees in it what he thinks a perversion

[1] E. g., Glaucë, Klytie, La Source (Antiques, pp. 75, 130, 139).

[2] E. g., Le Massacre de Mona, La Mort de Sigurd, Le Cœur de Hjalmar (Barbares, pp. 113, 96, 77).

[3] Barbares, pp. 61, 113.

[4] Cp., especially, Les Siècles maudits, La Bête escarlate (Tragiques, pp. 59, 107).

of the true message of Christ. Here, first, we find the purely satiric vein in "Une Acte de charité" (Barbares, p. 282), a subject borrowed from the Rhenish legend of Bishop Hatto, who burned the mendicants in his empty granary, or in the "Paraboles de Dom Guy" (Barbares, p. 315), a sermon of mediæval directness on the seven deadly sins and their embodiments in the age of the preacher. More completely objective are other poems that help us to realize the crushing weight on the mediæval mind of its belief in hell. Especially the dehumanizing religion of old Spain, where all colors are heightened and all passions intensified, has been ruthlessly presented in its barbarity,[1] while recently published fragments of De Lisle's posthumous "États du diable" show that the subject haunted him still.[2]

The question of the ages finds no answer in Leconte de Lisle. To those who think they know the answer he has only a message of warning; but for those who can enjoy poetry apart from its teaching, he has much more than that. "There are hours," says Lemaître, "when you are infamous enough to find that Lamartine says 'Gnan-Gnan' and Hugo 'Boum-Boum,' when the cries and apostrophes of De Musset[3] seem childish. Then you can enjoy Gautier; but there is something better. Never mind if you have n't the great Flaubert at hand; even he has too much feeling. Just read

[1] E. g., L'Accident de Don Iñigo, La Tête du comte, La Xiména (Barbares, pp. 289, 285, 293).

[2] In the "Revue des deux mondes," 1894. They deal with the Borgias. Others in the "Derniers Poèmes" (1895) appeared too late to be used for this study.

[3] It is to such singers of their own woe that De Lisle addresses the scathing sonnet "Les Montreurs" (Barbares, p. 222). A fine instance of impassive force is "Le Soir d'une bataille" (Barbares, p. 230).

Leconte de Lisle. For a moment you will have vision without pain, the serenity of Olympians, or of Satans appeased."

In 1866 Leconte de Lisle joined with several younger poets in "Le Parnasse contemporain," which, being followed by two like volumes in 1869 and 1876, gave to the group the name "Parnassians," by which was meant the school that prized, above all else, purity and beauty of form. Many of the group have attained really remarkable excellence in this kind, though their production, as is usual with poets of their type, is small, slow, and labored. The best continuation of De Lisle's spirit is in the Buddhistic poetry of Jean Lahor (Dr. Cazalis)[1] and the marionette-plays of Maurice Bouchor.[2] His peculiar art has been best learned by De Heredia, who perhaps has bettered the instruction.[3]

The recent popularity of this writer is interesting, for it marks a revival of a stricter taste and a reaction against the fantastic license of the school of Baudelaire, the Naturalist and Symbolist poets who have been most in evidence in recent years, and to whom we shall recur. De Heredia, as his name suggests, is a Spaniard, born in Cuba (1842). Indeed it is a little disquieting to see how many foreign names one meets in this literary generation, though any literature might be glad to welcome such a guest. He is the supreme flower of the Parnassian cultus of form, most picturesque, and so impersonal that his verses have not even

[1] L'Illusion, 1888 and, enlarged, 1893.

[2] Tobie, Noël, Sainte Cécile, Mystères d'Éleusis (1889–1894). Lyric: Les Symboles, 1894.

[3] Cp. Brunetière, Poésie lyrique, ii. 189; Lemaître, Contemporains, ii. 49; and Revue bleue, May, 1895.

the vague pessimistic gloom of De Lisle, but only a sort of expansion of heart at heroism and natural beauty, which it will be noticed is the most universal sentiment we can conceive. His work, hardly bulkier than Gray's, shows the same meticulous polish, and the reticence of a conscious artist who is never ready to lay aside the literary file. His sonnets would suggest the "Cameos" of Gautier, save that he has learned, perhaps from Verlaine and his Symbolist Decadents, the fascination of a delicate vague suggestion of the subjective that we miss in that hierophant of art for art.

His style is rich and highly colored, but more condensed, plastic, and precise than that of any modern French poet, unless it be Sully-Prudhomme.[1] His subjects are drawn from his recollections of his native Cuba, or out of the wonderful history of the old Spanish *conquistadores*, from one of whom, a companion of Cortez, he is himself descended. The scenes and traditions of his youth are reflected everywhere, but with them and in them appears the careful literary and scientific training of his student years at Havana and Paris.

Out of this combination of a tropical environment, heroic ancestry, cloistered training in the humanities, and the latest results of modern investigation in the precise studies of the École des Chartes, came a half-cento of sonnets, so compactly built that every word adds at once to the imagery and to the melody. What a study, for instance, in the marriage of compression and sonorousness is this sonnet on the "Conquérants,"

[1] The closest analogues to the sonnets of "Les Trophées" (1893) are to be found in the sonnets of Sully-Prudhomme's "Épreuves" and "Justice."

some part of whose beauty may not have evaporated even from this rhymeless but linear translation:[1]—

Like flight of falcons from their native quarry,
Fatigued with bearing their proud misery,
From Palas de Morguer brigands and captains
Sailed drunk with brutal and heroic dreams.
They went to win the metal fabulous
Cipango ripens in its distant mines,
And steady tropic winds sloped their lateens
To the strange borders of the western world.
Each evening of an epic morrow fain,
The tropic sea's phosphoric azure glow
Charmed with mirage of gold their slumberings;
Or bent on prow of the white caravels
They watched the climbing in a sky unknown
Of new stars from the bosom of the sea.

This whole piece is a study in rhetoric and harmony that will repay the most exact analysis, and the same heroic epoch has inspired a whole group of sonnets as well as several poems that depart from this favorite form of the Parnassian muse.[2] Other sonnets are bits

[1] Comme un vol de gerfauts hors du charnier natal,
Fatigués de porter leurs misères hautaines,
De Palas de Morguer, routiers et capitaines
Partaient, ivres d'un rêve héroïque et brutal.
Ils allaient conquérir le fabuleux métal
Que Cipango mûrit dans ses mines lointaines,
Et les vents alizés inclinaient leurs antennes
Aux bords mystérieux du monde occidental.
Chaque soir espérant des lendemains épiques
L'azur phosphorescent de la mer des Tropiques
Enchantait leur sommeil d'un mirage doré;
Ou penchés à l'avant des blanches caravelles
Ils regardaient monter dans un ciel ignoré
Du fond de l'Océan des étoiles nouvelles.

[2] E. g., "Conquérants d'or," of which some lines on the setting sun are deservedly famous. A translation of Bernal Diaz's "Chronicle" is a further witness to De Heredia's loyalty to ancestral memories, and his prose romance "La Nonne Alferez" (1894) touches the picaroon side of the same subject.

of pure description, among which one notes and admires the wholly exotic tone of the Japanese "Samourai," the dazzling colors of "Blason céleste," and the cold enamelled brilliancy of the "Récif de corail,"[1] while there is even a breath of human sympathy in "La Médaille antique" and "Sur un marbre brisé," and this note is carried also into the "Sonnets épigraphes," where there is a touch of the high-souled melancholy that befits the representative of a race whose past glories seem to contain no promise for the future.

In Leconte de Lisle the muse seemed to flee our inhospitable age; in De Heredia she wrapped herself in splendid imagery and philosophic contemplation. Meantime a more genuinely popular note was struck by Manuel and Coppée, who cultivated the field that Sainte-Beuve had planted, the descriptive poetry of common life, and so made themselves the poetic representatives of the Naturalistic School, though they are less thoroughgoing in meditating that thankless muse than the vociferous Richepin[2] or even than the occasional ventures in this field of Maupassant and the versatile Verlaine. Both Coppée and Manuel compromise a little with idealism, approaching perhaps most nearly to the model Sainte-Beuve had set up for himself in the "Pensées de Joseph Delorme." "I

[1] The last six lines are peculiarly praiseworthy: —

De sa splendide écaille éteignant les émaux;
Un grand poisson navigue á travers les rameaux [i. e. of the coral],
Dans l'onde transparente indolemment il rôde;
Et brusquement, d'un coup de sa nageoire en feu,
Il fait dans le cristal morne, immobile et bleu,
Courir un frisson d'or, de nacre et d'émeraude.

[2] Chansons des gueux, 1876; Les Blasphêmes, 1884. His later poems, e. g., Mes paradis (1894) and the dramatic *conte bleu*, "Vers la joie" (1894), illustrate a tendency very clearly marked in recent fiction toward an idealistic if not a religious reaction.

have tried," he said, "to be original in my fashion, humbly, like a bourgeois, watching closely the soul and nature, naming things of private life by their common names, but trying to relieve the prosaic side of these humble details by descriptions of human sentiments and natural objects." In this style Manuel[1] printed three collections of poems, "Pages intimes" (1866), "Pendant la guerre" (1871), and "Poèmes populaires" (1871), which won so great a popular success that a selection from them, "Poésies de l'école et du foyer" has been made for the use of French schools.

This domestic *genre* was almost immediately adopted by Coppée,[2] who calls Leconte de Lisle his master, though he seems rather an original genius of a secondary rank. He has written much in prose fiction and the drama, but it is as a poet that he must be studied, for it is the poetic element in his prose, and the epic or lyric note in his dramas, that gives them their peculiar charm. He began as a true Parnassian, an artist in verse who rejoiced in his handiwork and was skilled in all the mysteries of the craft, though not

[1] Born 1823. He has published also a fourth collection of poems, "En voyage," 1881, and several popular dramas. His profession is pedagogy.

[2] Born 1842. He collaborated in the "Parnasse contemporain" of 1866. His poems are collected under the titles: Le Reliquaire, 1866; Intimités, 1868; Poèmes modernes, 1869; Les Humbles, 1872; Le Cahier rouge, 1874; Olivier, 1875; Pendant le siège, 1875; Exilée, 1876; Les Mois, 1877; Le Naufrage, 1878. His dramatic work dates from 1869, and various volumes of prose tales have appeared since 1880. Mon franc parler (Journalistic essays), 1894. Critical articles on Coppée may be found in Brunetière, Poésie lyrique, ii. 189; Lemaître, Contemporains, i. 79; in France, Vie littéraire, i. 156; in the Journal des débats (Hebdom.), Sept. 15, 1894; in Revue bleue, Jan. 26, 1895.

without some taint of sentimental tinsel and a little of Gautier's indifference to the moral bearing of his work. Typical of this period is "Les Intimités," while four years later "Les Humbles," beneath their languorous coquetry, facile suavity, and fleeting grace that suggest Banville, struck quite another, a deeper, possibly also a higher note. Here, with studied simplicity and a beauty not without its sternness, he wrote the lyric of poverty and self-denial, the poetry of democracy. We see a band of emigrants forced to leave the only land they know, and looking to the future less with hope than with frightened anxiety; we are shown the nurse who returns from her city charge to find her own cradle empty, the son who toils his life out for his mother, and the domestic troubles of a "petit épicier." That Coppée's sympathy for the "humble" was genuine, earlier pieces, such as "The Blacksmiths' Strike" and "Angelus," attest; but he lacks sustained energy, and occasionally falls into a jesting triviality that grates on a sensitive ear. All this is laid aside, however, in "Pendant le siège," poems that ring with a true patriotism in defeat, and indignation at the Commune, that "insurrection of instincts without a country and without a God;" and these cries of pain are followed by a little group of "Promenades et intérieurs" which are perhaps the best poetic expression of modern Parisian life.

But the sobering effect of 1871 soon gave place to a gentler vein of poetic narration, suggesting now the dryad, now the faun, and occasionally the satyr. The domestic idyl has seldom found a prettier expression than in "Jeunes filles" and "Les Mois;" and in a few later poems, such as "La Tête de la sultane" and "La Vieille," he has revealed an unsuspected tragic strength

that his dramas attempt in vain.[1] But it is for his stories of the Parisian workman and lower middle class that Coppée will be remembered, for whether writing in prose or verse he is essentially a story-teller. Indeed, in recent years he seems to have doubted if poetry were after all the fittest vehicle for a sympathetic expression of democratic realism. In lyrics, at least, "the mixture of a lie doth ever add pleasure," and a truly realistic description of prosaic conditions will be more effective in prose. Hence "Contes rapides" (1888) has more readers, though less artistic value, than "Les Humbles."

Allied to the Parnassians by the chastened severity of his style, though gradually separated from them in recent years by a more sympathetic subjectivity, is the philosopher among French poets, Sully-Prudhomme,[2] who was born in Paris in 1839, and began the study of engineering, — an exact discipline that may account for some qualities in his poetic work. His first essay in verse, "Stances" (1855), won immediate popularity for its delicate elegiac sentiment, and convinced the poet of his calling. Possessed of an independent fortune and affected with a weakness of the eyes, he abandoned his profession and gave himself up to poetry, at first wholly in the lyric and elegiac manner, polishing trifles with an amateur's delight, till at last his vocation for serious and philosophic subjects

[1] His best tragedies are "Severo Torelli" and "Pour la couronne;" the best comedies, "Le Luthier de Cremone" and "Le Trésor."

[2] Les Épreuves, 1865; Les Solitudes, 1869; Les Destins, 1872; Vaines tendresses, 1875; Le Prisme, 1886; and two epics, La Justice, 1878; La Bonheur, 1888. Critical notices in Lemaître's Contemporains, i. 31 and iv. 199; in France's Vie littéraire, i. 156 and ii. 36; in Brunetière's Littérature contemporaine, 81, and also in his Poésie lyrique au xix. siècle.

appeared in his striking preface to a translation of a portion of Lucretius' poem on "The Nature of Things" (1869). From this time metaphysics struggled with poetry, till they fairly got the upper hand in the epics "Justice" and "Bonheur," the best of the few long poems in modern French literature.

But from the first his poetry had been thoughtful, aspiring to sound new depths "in the ocean of the soul," and taking for its field "all human history and human nature."[1] While essentially realistic, Sully-Prudhomme is not as pessimistic as most of his fellow poets. He sees good in evil,[2] and has a healthy faith in the value of struggle and action. He sees all the baseness that exasperates Baudelaire, but he believes that the spur of pleasure and ambition will unconsciously lead society upward, and for the declamatory gloom of De Musset's "Rolla" he has only indignant impatience, basing his opposition to the Romantic *maladie du siècle* on a rational positivism.[3] It is interesting and a little amusing to contrast the realistic psychology of love in "Jeunes Filles" or in "Femmes," with the nebulous sentiment of Lamartine or the gush of De Musset. None has ever caught so well as he, says Lemaître, the awakening of love in a boy, his thrill at the caress of a young girl, and later his manifold and hidden loves, the delicious beginnings of the first real passion, the pain of jealousy, intensified by the feeling that he is powerless to add to the happiness of her who has preferred another. The style of this

[1] "Le Vase brisé," the most popular and hackneyed of the "Stances," is not characteristic of the collection.

[2] E. g., the close of "Amérique."

[3] Cp. Joug, Parole, Dans la rue. Even the pessimism of "Rendez-vous" and especially of "Vœu" is not without a sympathetic tone.

work, as of all that follow, combines the precision of the Parnassians with something of the oratorical swing of Hugo, and finds in the development of metaphor and in the sonnet its fullest and favorite expression.

"Les Épreuves" is a collection of these sonnets, more sombre than "Stances" and more philosophic. He groups his poems under the heads Love, Doubt, Dream, Action. His Doubts reach their sharpest articulation in the "Cri perdu" of the forced laborers on the pyramids that "mounts, rises, seeking gods and justice, while for three thousand years Cheops, beneath that huge monument, sleeps in unalterable glory,"[1] but they find their most philosophic expression in such lines as "God is not nothing, but God is no one, God is all,"[2] or "Strange truth . . . that the universe, the all, should be God, and not know it."[3] Such thoughts lead him to self-forgetful reflection, to dreams of communion with universal nature from which he rises to the more hopeful strains of "En avant," "Roue," "Fer," "Le Monde à nu," "Les Téméraires," true poems of this age of exploration, invention, and research. His "Zenith," a little later, is a noble hymn to science, grand in its simple and sober imagery as it tells in Miltonic lines the advance of the human mind, and closes with a superb vision of aeronauts who, to extend the bounds of knowledge,

[1] Il monte, il va, cherchant les dieux et la justice,
Et depuis trois mille ans sous l'énorme bâtisse
Dans sa gloire, Chéops inaltérable dort.

[2] Dieu n'est pas rien, mais Dieu n'est pas personne : il est Tout.
(Les Dieux.)

[3] Étrange vérité . . .
Que l'Univers, le Tout, soit Dieu sans le savoir !
(Scrupule.)

ascend ever higher in their self-immolation till they sink lifeless: —

> Ye cast your bodies, a last weight, to earth,
> And letting fall the veil of mystery,
> Ye finished your ascent uncompanied.[1]

Though, as a disciple of Comte, Sully-Prudhomme must needs cautiously add that their immortality is in their work and example, in the loving memory of mankind.

The war and its disasters, that roused in Hugo an eloquent but false and sentimental cosmopolitanism, filled Sully-Prudhomme with a nobler patriotism. "I have a heart for my country that overflows her borders; the more I am French the more I feel myself human." If he is not yet naturally hopeful, he is stronger for the experiences of 1871. The "Solitudes" of 1869 had been almost feminine in their delicate melancholy, a note that can be most readily caught from these lines on boys' first days at boarding-school, a favorite declamation piece in France: —

> Leurs blouses sont très bien tirées,
> Leurs pantalons en bon état,
> Leurs chaussures toujours cirées,
> Ils ont l'air sage et délicat.
>
> Les forts les appellent des filles,
> Et les malins des innocents;
> Ils sont doux, ils donnent leurs billes,
> Ils ne seront pas commerçants.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Oh! la leçon qui n'est pas sue,
> Le devoir qui n'est pas fini:
> Une réprimande reçue:
> Le déshonneur d'être puni!
>
> . . . . . .

[1] Vous les avez jetés, dernier lest, à la terre
Et, laissant retomber le voile du mystère
Vous avez achevé l'ascension tout seuls.

Ils songent qu'ils dormaient naguères,
Douillettement ensevelis,
Dans les berceaux, et que les mères
Les prenaient parfois dans leurs lits. . . .
(Première solitude.)

In the "Vaines tendresses" of six years later this melancholy has become more profound, the revelation of the sources of human suffering more complete. To the author of "Rendez-vous," half poetry, half music, the world seems not more evil but more sad, and in "Vœu" the poet, in a Malthusian mood, noting how "multitudes increase upon this plague-infested earth," determines for sweet compassion's sake, to let his "best-loved son, who shall never be born, remain in the nameless realm of the potential. Better guarded than the dead, more inaccessible, thou shalt not issue from the shadow where once I slept." [1] Both this collection and "Les Destins" of 1872 end with verses on Death, the great consoler.

The philosophic mind whose progress has been traced in other collections, is the warp and woof of "Les Destins," which grapple with the fundamental antinomies of life.

The world . . .
Hides a profound accord of balanced destinies . . .
Not small nor bad it is, nor great nor good . . .
To thee who makest each being serve all others,
Nothing is good or bad, but all is rational.

[1] Demeure dans l'empire innommé du possible,
O fils le plus aimé, qui ne naîtras jamais.
Mieux sauvé que les morts et plus inaccessible,
Tu ne sortiras pas de l'ombre où je dormais.
Compare also the "Volupté" and "Souhait" of this collection.

Measuring never by my petty fortune
Evil or good, I tread my narrow path
Calm, as an atom in the void, and vow
My humble part to thy whole masterpiece.[1]

This brings us naturally to "Justice" and "Bonheur," the two great French philosophic poems of this century. The former is divided into vigils, where alternate sonnets and replies of three quatrains and a couplet keep up a sort of dialogue between the aspirations of the poet in his search for Justice and the cruel mockery of his experiences. Each sonnet marks a step in his inquiry, which is conducted in rigid logical sequence. Among men, as among States, the poet discerns only selfishness, and Nature has taught him the pitiless doctrine of its struggle for life and the survival of the fittest. This negative part of the work is more satisfactory, and possibly more sincere, than the positive, which seeks the categorical imperative in the demand that each be accorded its true worth, so that from each the best may be drawn for all. The poet finds Justice at last only where he felt it at first, in his conscience, and sacrifices the consistency of his reasoning to his soul's sincerity.

In "Bonheur" also the heart plays tricks with the cobwebs of the brain. The moral appears to be that we can imagine no condition of life better than our

[1] L'univers . . .
Cache un accord profond des Destins balancés . . .
Ni petit ni mauvais, il n'est ni grand ni bon . . .
Pour toi qui fais servir chaque être à tous les autres,
Rien n'est bon ni mauvais, tout est rationnel.
Ne mesurant jamais sur ma fortune infime
Ni le bien ni le mal, dans mon étroit sentier
J'irai calme, et je voue, atome dans l'abîme,
Mon humble part de force, à ton chef-d'œuvre entier.

own; that the mind, like a kaleidoscope, can only rearrange its sense-perceptions; that we form our picture of heaven by negation of evil and elimination of pain. But where there is no pain, there is no incitement to effort, and existence lacks its purpose and motive power.

This thesis the poet undertakes to prove by the experience of Faustus and Stella, two lovers parted on earth and united in an extra-terrestrial paradise, very like earth save that its inhabitants are vegetarians, delighted

> To see no longer hanging in the shambles
> Corpses laid open,
> That human flesh, nourished by other flesh,
> May nourish some day worms.[1]

They live rather on odors and flowers; their joy is in harmony of colors, and in a love freed from the exigencies of physical existence. No wonder this Lalla Rookh paradise did not satisfy Faustus, and he turned to the pursuit of knowledge. "A torment broods over my joy," he says, "for beneath the most charming object I long to know what it conceals." In short, "the evil of the unknown had already tempted him." The exposition that follows of philosophic systems and scientific theories is admirable as a poetic *tour de force*, but it brings Faustus no nearer his goal, till

> The phantom of truth . . .
> Lets sink unsatisfied at last his brow
> On which the wing of doubt beats sure of prey.[2]

[1] Qu'il fait bon ne plus voir pendre à la boucherie
Les cadavres ouverts,
Pour que l'humaine chair par d'autres chairs nourrie
Nourrisse un jour des vers.

[2] Le fantôme du vrai . . .
Laisse enfin retomber son front inassouvi,
Que bat l'aile du doute assuré de sa proie.

Now first can the plaint of mankind that has been ever ascending and filling all space reach the ears of Faustus and Stella. They lack the joy of sacrifice to make their felicity supreme,

> For man enjoys not long without remorse
> Aught save the goods he buys by struggles dear.
> True joy is only in the sense of worth.[1]

From this moment the poem breathes a loftier and more sympathetic spirit. Faustus will descend to earth to teach men higher wisdom, though he must suffer with them. But long ages have elapsed since their change of state, and they find the human race vanished from a globe now peopled only by plants and animals. Nor will they repeople it, for without its torments life would lose its grandeur, a grandeur that made it preferable to the blissful existence whence they came. So they leave earth again, reconciled by their martyrdom of will to the joys of paradise. The conclusion is a curious paradox. Life is sorrowful and sad, but it would be worse if it were better. True happiness, it seems, involves sacrifice and suffering; and as Lemaître has suggested, "Bonheur" might as well be called "Malheur."

The great service of Sully-Prudhomme to French poetry is that he has best translated into its language the new range of emotions of our scientific age. He is simple, strong, sincere, possibly even too conscientious and too labored in his eagerness to unite the fullest truth with the greatest art. "Perhaps no poet," says Brunetière, "ever lived the life of his contemporaries

[1] Car l'homme ne jouit longtemps et sans remords
Que des biens chèrement payés par ses efforts . . .
Il n'est vraiment heureux qu'autant qu'il se sent digne.

more fully, none has ever translated better its noblest unrest."

But beside this noble unrest there is an ignoble restlessness; and this morbid decadent tendency found an early and intense expositor in Banville's unfortunate friend Charles Baudelaire, the progenitor of the modern Symbolists, in whom we find the poetic expression of a state of weary yet restless reaction from the confidence of scientific determinism, a sort of literary hyperæsthesia, rising at times to a real emotional hysteria. It is from him, the most melancholy of the adepts of shudder and woe, that Verlaine and his fellows have drawn the solvent poison of their fascination. It is only through understanding him that we shall understand them; and it is worth while to understand them, not so much for what they are as for what they promise and indicate.

Baudelaire[1] was a Parisian, and two years the senior of Banville. A voyage to India in his youth left a deep impress on his mind that is reflected in the imagery, the colors, and the odors of his poetry. His uneventful literary career began with critical articles in Parisian journals that at the time attracted little attention, but seem now to show remarkable keenness and foresight, so that, as Brunetière observes, they deserve to be "read, reread, and retained" (Poésie lyrique ii. 139). However, the first of his works to exercise strong influence on his contemporaries was his translation of Poe's

[1] Born 1831; died 1867. Fleurs du mal, 1857, and with a preface by Gautier, 1868; Œuvres, 7 vols., 1868. Criticism: Spronck, Les Artistes littéraires, 83; Bourget, Essais de psychologie contemporaine, i. 3; Lemaître, Contemporains, iv. 17; Pellissier, Mouvement littéraire, 279; Lanson, Littérature, 1034. See also Fortnightly Review, June, 1891.

tales in 1856. This was followed in the next year by a volume of poems under the strange title "Flowers of Evil," six of which were such rank blossoms as to be condemned by the squeamish censors of the Second Empire. But not even this advertisement aroused any general interest in the book during the lifetime of the author. Indeed the tide did not turn till after the German war; but it has since set so steadily that work which he himself would probably have rejected has been gathered into a posthumous volume (1887).

The important place that is now accorded to these "Flowers of Evil" is partly due to their anticipation of a morbid pessimism, more common now than in his day, and partly no doubt to the warm appreciation with which Gautier returned the dedication to him of the "Fleurs du mal" as to "the impeccable poet" in a long essay prefixed to the edition of 1868. This appreciation was however too tardy to bring any balm to Baudelaire's perturbed spirit, for he had already died in a hospital after a year of semi-lunacy, induced, at least in part, by the excessive use of nervous stimulants. Perhaps this was the end that he would have desired, for he tells us that "he cultivated hysteria with delight and terror."

To Baudelaire nature seems evil, and so all that is natural becomes hateful. If, like Gautier, he is haunted by visions of death, he does not shrink from them. Rather does he take a mournful pleasure in sensations of decay and corruption, believing, like that old nihilist Mephistopheles, that all is worthy of perishing. How far this pessimism is sincere, how far it is perverse, is hard to determine. Certainly in his expression of it there is much that is forced and intentionally brutal, together with passages of curious idealism, that seem like the

lees of the Romantic wine, "the last convulsion of expiring individualism." "Oh death," he exclaims,

> "Pour out thy poison that it may comfort us!
> We wish, so much this fire burns our brains,
> To plunge to the gulf's bottom, heaven, hell, what reck we?
> To the bottom of the unknown to find the new."[1]

Baudelaire clothes his weird subjects in a form more restrained and within its own limits almost as masterly as Hugo's. He sought his vocabulary largely in the Latin poets of the decadence, and defended his choice with his wonted perversity, as "singularly fitted to express passion such as the modern world understood and felt." "If his bouquet is composed of strange flowers, metallic colors, and heady perfumes . . . he can reply that hardly any others grow in this black soil, saturated with the decay of corruption, like the cemetery sod of decrepit civilizations in which are dissolving amid mephitic miasmas the corpses of foregone centuries."[2]

The first "Flower" in Baudelaire's garden gives the reader fair warning, for it assures us that we are all "hypocritical slaves" of ennui "most ugly, fierce, unclean in the infamous menagerie of our vices." This thought he develops in the one hundred and seven poems of "Spleen and Ideal," where shuddering at the

[1] O Mort . . .
Verse-nous ton poison pour qu'il nous réconforte!
Nous voulons, tant ce feu nous brûle le cerveau,
Plonger au fond du gouffre, Enfer ou Ciel, qu'importe?
Au fond de l'Inconnu pour trouver du *nouveau*.
(Page 351, edition of 1892, from which all paged citations are hereafter made.) Cp. also his Poem in Prose, "N'importe où hors du monde," and in the "Fleurs," numbers lxxviii.–lxxx., xc., cli. 8.

[2] Gautier, Preface (freely translated).

vileness of life alternates with aspirations for a serene emancipation from it that the poet has not the strength of will to attain. Throughout, the imagery is less of the eye than of touch and odors. There is an East-Indian sensitiveness to perfumes. Some seem to him fresh, some green as nature, some proud, some fierce, some purifying. Again and again he recurs to their intoxicating fascination, which they share with cats, to whom are especially dedicated three poems (pp. 135, 161, 189) which it is curious to compare with Taine's sonnet to his favorite cat, — a type, says Mr. Monod, of his own softened, reasonable stoicism. Baudelaire's intense imagination pictures these disdainers of their masters as they haunt the darkness with their phosphorescent eyes and electric skins, and he finds a charm in their silent movements and their mysterious treachery. Indeed, as Gautier wittily observes, "Baudelaire himself was a voluptuous cat, with velvety ways and mysterious manner, delicate, caressing, supple, strong, fixing on things and men a gaze of disquieting brightness, free, wilful, difficult to restrain, but without perfidy and faithfully attached to those to whom he had once offered his sympathy." Baudelaire's tabbies are worthy companions of Gray's "pensive Selima." But it must be admitted that his women are less pleasing. True "flowers of evil," all are corrupt, insatiable, incapable of love, instruments of degradation and torture, — all save the unattainable Beatrix of his poet's vision.[1]

[1] Perhaps the most noted pieces in "Spleen et idéal" are: "Bénédiction," a morbid picture of the torture of his poet's life; "La Vie antérieure," a vision of Indian serenity, wealth, and perfume that cannot still his languishing secret grief; "Don Juan aux enfers," impassive and impenitent; and "Une Charogne," whose ghastly subject, a putrefying corpse, has maintained for forty years its bad eminence as the most horrible poem in the language.

Many of these poems are strong, and some are beautiful; but their beauty is awful, grewsome, satanic. Less forced is the pessimism of his "Parisian Pictures," several of which are in lighter and more sympathetic vein, and some mere airy fantasies. Of them all, perhaps that which clings most to the mind is "Les Petites vieilles," the wretched wrecks of a youth too gay, who bear with them always some pathetic token of the primrose path on their stony descent to the grave. Five poems on wine that follow bring us back to a morose ferocity, that rises to delirious intensity in "Le Vin de l'assassin," the inebriate murderer who rejoices that his wife is dead because now he can drink his fill without being racked by her reproachful cries.[1] Noteworthy among later poems is the Dantesque imagery of "Femmes damnées" and the melancholy ferocity of "Les Deux bonnes sœurs," debauchery and death, "whose ever virgin flanks, draped in rags, travail in eternal fruitlessness."[2] But perhaps the climax of the whole is reached in his "Revolt," where beneath this demoniacal galling the poet becomes so possessed by the spirit of evil as to conceive the heritage of Satan to be the noblest aspiration of the human soul. A few lines may not be without interest as illustrations of this curious mental aberration: —

> Verily, as for me I will leave content
> A world where deed is not sister of thought.
> May I use the sword and perish by the sword.
> Saint Peter denied Jesus . . . He did well.

[1] Ma femme est morte, je suis libre;
Je puis donc boire tout mon soûl.
Lorsque je rentrais sans un sou
Ses cris me déchiraient la fibre.

[2] Dont le flanc toujours vierge et drapé de guenilles
Sous l'éternel labeur n'a jamais enfanté.

Again he bids "the race of Cain ascend to heaven and cast God down to earth," and finally closes his satanic and superb "Litany to Satan" with these words: —

> Glory and praise to thee, O Satan, in the highest
> Heaven where once thou reignedst and in the depths
> Of hell where vanquished thou in silence dream'st.
> Beneath the tree of knowledge let my soul
> Repose by thee that day when o'er thy brow
> Like a new house of God its branches shall extend,[1]

This is an obvious climax; and with a short epilogue of Death, where "from top to bottom of the fatal ladder" the poet discerns only "the weary spectacle of immortal sin,"[2] the "Fleurs du mal" come to their wild end.

These one hundred and fifty-one poems are short, compactly built, and carefully polished in their laborious moral paradoxes, like fungus growths or noxious bacilli, that find in this rich brain their natural nidus and full nourishment. His prose works furnish an

[1] Certes, je sortirai, quant à moi, satisfait
D'un monde où l'action n'est pas la sœur du rêve,
Puissé-je user du glaive et périr par le glaive:
Saint Pierre a renié Jésus . . . il a bien fait!
. . . . . .
Race de Caïn au ciel monte
Et sur la terre jette Dieu
. . . . . .
Gloire et louange à toi, Satan, dans les hauteurs
Du Ciel où tu régnas, et dans les profondeurs
De l'Enfer, où, vaincu, tu rêves en silence!
Fais que mon âme un jour, sous l'Arbre de Science
Près de toi se repose, à l'heure, où sur ton front
Comme un Temple nouveau ses rameaux s'épandront.

[2] Du haut jusques en bas de l'échelle fatale
Le spectacle ennuyeux de l'immortel péché.

herbarium of equally startling exotic flowers, and give a clew to the botany of this literary genus. In his "Fusées" we may read that the supreme and unique joy of love lies in the certainty of doing injury. "All joy is based on evil," a topsy-turvy notion by no means original with Baudelaire, for it had been preached with equal perversity some decades before he was born by the Marquis de Sade.[1] In this spirit he defines a young girl as the being that "unites the greatest imbecility to the greatest depravity," and thinks the very worst charge against woman to be that "she is natural, that is to say, abominable." After this one is prepared for his avowal: "It has always seemed to me horrible to be a useful man."

All this is not only the contradiction of common sentiment but of common sense. Yet, though Baudelaire himself warns us that "a little of the charlatan is always permissible to genius," he seems to have schooled himself into a certain sincerity of self-contradiction, worshipping Satan while he clung to Catholicism, and becoming toward the close of his life morosely ascetic in resolution and extravagantly hedonistic in action. He united three discordant elements, — the philosophy of science, the ethics of materialism, and the mysticism, though not the faith, of mediæval demonology; that is to say, in his theory and in his practice he was a decadent, one who put his new wine into an old bottle, a man out of place in his social environment, and so tending, as science tells us that all misplaced organic matter does, to disintegration.[2]

[1] The curious may consult Jules Blais, Satanisme (1895), with a preface by the novelist Huysmans. Among the novels of De Sade "Justine" is perhaps sufficiently characteristic.

[2] Cp. Bourget, l. c. 24, for a discussion of the philosophy of decadence.

This contradiction in the poet's mind is reflected in his work. The new and the old, Romanticism and Naturalism, dwell in him side by side, — spiritual ideals with putrefying corpses, the most diseased sensuality with the most exalted asceticism, or, in his own words, "ecstasy of life and disgust of life." He hates woman with a mystic mediæval hatred, and in spite of this, or because of it, he unites a passionate cult to his bitter contempt, as though he were trying to realize that complete debauchery of the will which reasons that since what is natural is evil, what is artificial must be virtuous and good. But this is pessimism reduced to the absurd, just as the same doctrine in æsthetics is the reduction to the absurd of art.

This state of mind has long ceased to be exceptional. Deep discontent with the social order, if not with the moral order, of the world is almost a sign of the times. In politics it shows itself in nihilistic, anarchic, and socialistic dreams; Schopenhauer's popularity reflects it in philosophy, while in literature Hardy in England, Sudermann in Germany, and Maupassant in France typify a moral unrest. But this is as much as to say that Baudelaire's æsthetics are a house built on sand, that his efforts and those of his followers are foredoomed to an impotent and lame conclusion. There can be no lasting fame for decadence. And yet the work of this forerunner has an exquisitely poisonous originality that preserves his memory as in arsenic green. Who before him ever sang with such perverse genius that health was disgusting, that enamel and rice powder were lovelier than red cheeks, that the odors of the laboratory were purer than those of the garden, and that no hues of life were so fair as those of phosphorescent decay? Madame de Staël, for

all her theory of progress, hesitated to prefer Latin literature to Greek, but Baudelaire did not shrink from proclaiming that Petronius was superior to Virgil. He would have for his muse "no matron repulsive in her healthy virtue." Artificiality, formal elaboration, "the absolute expression," the union of harmony and melody, of form and tone, was his Sisyphean ambition, as it had been that of Banville, whom in his minor key Baudelaire equalled and perhaps surpassed. It is said that he carried this endeavor even into the modulations of his conversation, rejoicing in the music of his own voice.[1] This instinct enabled him to anticipate the long-contested verdict of the Wagnerian music-drama, so that even before that composer had obtained a sympathetic hearing in his native Germany, Paris had listened incredulously to the enthusiastic appreciation of this father of the Decadents who was indeed precisely suited to sympathize with the author of Parzival.[2]

Baudelaire's genius is unhealthy, and unfortunately disease is more contagious than health. The robust sentiment of Hugo finds but a faint echo on Parnassus, while from the putrescent hot-bed of the "Fleurs du mal" there has sprung a rank and pestiferous growth of poison plants that have shed the winged seeds of literary disorganization and morbid psychology over

[1] His reading aloud of poetry seems to have produced a very deep impression on the finest minds of his generation, among them Stendhal, Gautier, Hugo, Flaubert, Banville, Leconte de Lisle, and Delacroix, to whom Baudelaire was most loyal in friendship and generous in critical appreciation.

[2] Brunetière, Poésie lyrique, ii. 241. The relation is urged, with grotesque exaggeration, in Nordau's "Entartung;" but this and the following paragraph were written before the author had seen that flimsy fancy.

our strange *fin de siècle* generation. These noxious germs have been powerfully aided in their development by some foreign results of similar causes. The Russian novelists, the English painters, the German composers have combined to undermine the power of the clear scientific spirit of Taine, and to cultivate in enervated minds the diathesis of indefinite mysticism that finds its present expression in the Symbolists.

Determinist philosophy and analytical science, that for a time held high carnival and undisputed sway in French fiction, and obtained a more sober recognition in the drama, won foothold in the lyric poetry of the Parnassians only by compromise. And so it was natural that the reaction against the positivist, scientific spirit should manifest itself here first and most strongly. Symbolism, stripped of its antic garb, is an effort to re-establish the place of metaphysical thought in poetry. It has been usually a misdirected effort; but though the attempt has failed, it has its eternal justification in the unsolvable mystery of nature. Indeed a certain symbolism is consistent with, or perhaps one should rather say, inherent in, complete naturalism. For, as Brunetière happily puts it, the Symbolists have no other origin than the profoundly human need of making abstractions cognizable by materializing them, and no other excuse for being than to manifest physically to all what is spiritually accessible only to few. Thus Symbolism becomes metaphysics manifested by images and made sensible to the heart. But one of the conditions of a true symbol is that it shall be clear, and that the work of the Symbolists obviously is not. Hence it is what this school indicates and what it promises rather than what it realizes, that gives interest to the somewhat incoherent utterances

of these the most direct descendants in the poetic family of Baudelaire. For in times past these are the conditions that have preceded poetic revivals.[1] But if from this point of view all these vagrants of genius have their attraction, one only had the divine breath of which Horace speaks, and he was the greatest vagrant of them all, the discharged prisoner and social outcast, Paul Verlaine.

The resemblance of this true poet to Baudelaire is less like to like than like in difference. It has indeed been said that Baudelaire invented a new shudder and Verlaine a new woe, but personally there is a closer parallel between Verlaine and Villon, for both were Bohemians by preference rather than by necessity, and both cultivated eccentricity in their lives and in their verses. This interest in form for its own sake allies Verlaine also to the Parnassians; but from that company his spirit, that brooked no rule, soon parted. Before the German war he had published three collections of verse; then for eleven years he vanished from the surface of society, but reappeared in 1881 with "Sagesse," after which he led a vagabond life between workhouses, cafés, and hospices, publishing frequent volumes of verse and occasional articles in the critical reviews until his death, in January, 1896.[2]

The first verses of Verlaine suggest the somewhat

[1] Brunetière, Poésie lyrique, ii. 229, and Littérature contemporaine, 155.

[2] The chronology of the chief volumes of Verlaine is: Poèmes saturnines, 1867; La Fête galante, 1868; La Bonne chanson, 1870; Sagesse, 1881; Jadis et naguère, 1883; Parallèlement, 1885; Mes hôpitaux, 1891. A convenient anthology of his poetry is contained in Choix de poésies de Paul Verlaine (Charpentier, 1892).

Criticism: Lemaître, Contemporains, iv. 60; Brunetière, ii. 243; Fortnightly Review, March, 1891 (Delille).

earlier poems of Baudelaire and Leconte de Lisle, and betray also the influence of Edgar Poe. Already in "La Fête galante" one finds traces of that delight in phraseology, in the concord of sweet sounds, that grew on him through each succeeding volume, until far from "chiselling words like cups," as he said and supposed, he came to rely more and more for his effects on sonorousness, sentiment, and a mysterious obscurity that resists exact analysis and quite defies translation, which may indeed indicate the mental state of the writer but can give no idea of his instinct for melody. To take but a single instance from his first collection, the "Poèmes saturnines." One need only read aloud this "Chanson d'automne" to feel its exquisite melody :

Les sanglots longs
Des violons
  De l'automne
Blessent mon cœur
D'une langueur
  Monotone.

Tout suffocant
Et blême, quand
  Sonne l'heure,
Je me souviens
Des jours anciens
  Et je pleurs.

Et je m'en vais
Au vent mauvais
  Qui m'emporte
Deçà delà,
Pareil à la
  Feuille morte.

But if we translate this, we shall see how far its charm is independent of its thought. Take away

timbre and rhyme and there is not much reason left in "The long sobs of the violins of autumn wound my heart with a monotonous languor. Suffocating and pale when sounds the hour, I remember ancient days and I weep, and I am borne along on the cruel wind that carries me hither and thither like a dead leaf." So too this picture of Paris is exquisite to the ear but mere midsummer madness to the logical mind: —

La lune plaquait ses teintes de zinc
Par angles obtus;
Des bouts de fumée en forme de cinq
Sortaient drus et noirs des hauts toits pointus.
. . . . . .
Moi j'allais rêvant du divin Platon
Et de Phidias
Et de Salamine et de Marathon
Sous l'œil clignotant des bleus becs de gaz.

Who ever noticed as he walked at night in a Paris street the shape of the smoke wreaths from the then absolutely invisible chimney-pots? Who ever noticed bright moonlight shadows on a flaringly lighted city sidewalk? And why, finally, should Verlaine or anybody else dream of Plato and Phidias and Salamis and Marathon on a crowded Parisian boulevard, unless indeed he be a mental degenerate?

And yet the eye may grow impatient of images that it cannot see, and the mind of phantom thoughts that elude its grasp, but the man who has music in his soul will be won back ever again by the indefinable charm of this faun-like genius. There are, however, degrees in his eccentricity, and he who is not to the manner born will find "La Fête galante" and "La Bonne chanson" the most accessible of Verlaine's volumes. It is true that these delicate little trifles

savor sometimes of that intertwining of sentiment and sensuousness that characterized the poetry of the eighteenth century, but they are full of the loveliness of a studied artificiality, much of the charm of which depends on the literary culture of the reader. To catch the grace of "L'Allée" or of "Columbine," one must know a little of Parny and much of Watteau, for the former poem is a Dresden shepherdess in *fin de siècle* alexandrines and the latter is her joyous companion in a song measure that might have charmed Banville himself. The love ditties of "La Bonne chanson" are simpler, and so have a more perennial attractiveness. Some of these little songs sing themselves so to the heart that it seems a sort of literary sacrilege to attempt to translate them into prose or limping verses. But does not this speak for itself? —

La lune blanche
Luit dans les bois ;
De chaque branche
Part une voix
Sous la ramée . . .
Oh bien aimée.

L'étang reflète
Profond miroir
La silhouette
Du saule noir
Où le vent pleure . . .
Rêvons : c'est l'heure.

Un vaste et tendre
Apaisement
Semble descendre
Du firmament
Que l'astre irise . . .
C'est l'heure exquise.

The years that separated "La Bonne chanson" from "Sagesse" intensified both the strength and the weakness of Verlaine's character. The contradictions of his nature became even more startling than those of Baudelaire. Here the poet of "La Fête galante" and the future author of "Parallèlement" proclaimed with agonized sincerity and the most intensely Catholic devotion that the Jesuits were the hope of social morals, and that Moses was the only scientist. Even the good old times when "Maintenon cast on raptured France the shadow and the peace of her linen caps" are hardly orthodox enough for the convert's enthusiasm, and he prefers to those halcyon days of Gallicism the middle ages with "their high theology and firm morals"[1] In these verses his exalted faith holds converse with God and Christ as none since Thomas à Kempis has done, and hymns the glories of Mary in verses unsurpassed in French. Penitence has rarely reached a more intense lyric expression than in that series of sonnets where God and the sinner reason together in verses that have been called by a great modern critic "the first in French poetry that express truly the love of God." Yet these are equalled, and in a way excelled, by an exquisite hymn to the Virgin and other poems that reach the extreme intensity of self-renunciation.[2] But

[1] C'est vers le Moyen Âge énorme et délicat,
Qu'il faudrait que mon cœur en panne navigât.
. . . . . .
Haute théologie et solide morale
Guidé par la folie unique de la Croix.

(From "Non. Il fut gallican," but compare "Sagesse d'un Louis Racine.")

[2] The sonnets begin "Mon Dieu m'a dit;" the hymn to Mary, "Je ne veux plus aimer." Cp. also, "O mon Dieu, vous m'avez blessé l'amour." All these are in the "Choix de poésies," pp. 159–190.

even in Verlaine's "Sagesse" there are pieces as hard to set in order as a Chinese puzzle,[1] for Catholicism had not weaned him from the idolatry of words, and he was presently to show in his pitifully curious "Parallèlement" that it had not weaned him any more than the same Catholic aspirations had done Baudelaire, from an attempt to combine the worship of God with that of the flesh, in what is indeed a melancholy parallel.

The poetry that follows "Sagesse" grows steadily more incoherent and uneven, so that it is impossible to speak of progress or retrogression from volume to volume, while in each there are striking groups and single poems. Perhaps his strongest recent work was in political and social satire. In a ballad dedicated to Luise Michel he defined the Republican leaders as "perverted talent, megatherium or bacillus, raw soldier, insolent shyster (*robin*), or some brittle compromise, giant of mud with feet of clay."[2] But if the government delights him not, neither does Paris, that "glaring pile of white stones, where the sun rages as in a conquered country. All vices, the exquisite and the hideous, have their lair in this desert of white stones."[3] Some of the realistic pictures of tavern and street in the

[1] E. g., "L'Espoir luit comme un brin de paille dans l'étable," which is ingeniously unravelled by Lemaître, l. c. 99.

[2] Gouvernements de maltalent,
Mégathérium ou bacille,
Soldat brut, robin insolent,
Ou quelque compromise fragile,
Géant de boue aux pieds d'argile.

[3] La "grande ville." Un tas criard de pierres blanches
Où rage le soleil comme en pays conquis.
Tous les vices ont leur tanière, les exquis
Et les hideux, dans ce désert de pierres blanches.

workmen's wards are gems in their way, though their brilliancy is more that of the cat's eye or the moonstone than that of the diamond or the emerald. Here is a single example among many:[1] —

> The noise of the wineshop, the mud of the walk,
> Sickly trees shedding leaves in the dusky air,
> The omnibus, tempest of iron and mud,
> That creaks ill balanced between its four wheels
> And slowly rolls its eyes, red and green;
> Workmen going to the club while they smoke
> Their cutty-pipes under the gendarmes' nose,
> Roofs dripping, walls oozing, and pavement that slips,
> Broken asphalt and gutters overflowing the sewer,
> Behold my road — with paradise at the end.

Then there are among these verses fantastic bits of *diablerie* that suggest opium dreams. There is a weird fascination in the high festival of the satans at Ecbatana, where they "make litter of their five senses for the seven sins" and at last attempt "to maintain the balance in their duel with God by sacrificing hell to universal love."[2] Another of these "twilight pieces,"

[1] Le bruit du cabaret, la fange du trottoir,
Les plantanes déchus s'effeuillant dans l'air noir,
L'omnibus, ouragan de ferailles et de boue,
Qui grince mal assis entre ses quatre roues,
Et roule ses yeux verts et rouges lentement;
Les ouvriers allant au club, tout en fumant
Leur brûle-gueule au nez des agents de police,
Toits qui dégoûtent, murs suintants, pavé qui glisse,
Bitume défoncé, ruisseaux comblant l'égout;
Voilà ma route — avec le paradis au bout.

[2] Font litière aux sept péchés de leurs cinq sens.
. . . . . .
En maintenant l'équilibre de ce duel,
Par moi l'Enfer dont c'est ici le repaire
Se sacrifie à l'Amour universel!

as Verlaine grimly calls them, represents a countess in prison holding in her lap the head of her husband, whom she has killed in a fit of jealousy while he was in mortal sin. The head speaks to tell her that he loves her still, and gasps: "Damn thyself that we be not parted." "Pity, pity, my God!" she shrieks, and by that prayer is torn from her lover to paradise, to discover, like another of these incarnations of passion, that "hell is absence."

Such conceptions are the sign of an unbalanced mind, of which many traces can be found in other poems whose rhythm has the capricious beauty of a hashish dream and, like our English "Kubla-Khan," defies the analysis of the rhetorician. An instance of this is afforded by his "Art poétique," which has a double interest because it both illustrates and characterizes the aspirations of the decadent school, though they write their best poetry when they are recreant to it. It may not be without interest, therefore, to translate as well as may be the sense, or what seems to be the sense, of a few stanzas, laboring to be literal, though with the certainty of remaining obscure: "Music before everything; therefore choose the unequal, more vague, more soluble in air, with nothing in it that has weight or pose. Then, too, you must not go choose your words too cautiously. Nothing is dearer than the gray song, where the indefinite joins the precise . . . For shade is still our desire, — not color, only shade. Oh, shade, sole reliance! Dream to the dream, and flute to the horn." [1]

[1] De la musique avant toute chose,
Et, pour cela, préfère l'Impair
Plus vague, plus soluble dans l'air,
Sans rien en lui qui pèse ou qui pose.

What this last line may mean I cannot conjecture, nor perhaps Verlaine either, for a little later he adds this counsel: "Let thy verse be good luck scattered on the crisped wind of the morning that reeks of mint and thyme . . . And all the rest is literature."[1] Which is merely Verlaine's recognition of the fact that to him words are more than ideas, style more than matter; and though this is contrary to any true symbolism in poetry, it is true in a large measure of the verses of many decadents who have allowed themselves to be called Symbolists though they have been more appropriately described by Verlaine himself as "Cymbalists."

Of this group the men who have attracted the most attention are the Greek Moréas, the Americans Merrill and Vielé-Griffin, the Belgian dramatist Mæterlinck, and the Frenchmen Ghil, Mallarmé, and, probably most talented of them all, De Regnier.

These poets undertake, or profess to undertake, to express essentially poetic sentiments indirectly by far-fetched metaphors, or even by the sound of words and letters quite independently of their received signification. Thus Ghil tells us that "*a* is black, *e* white,

Il faut ainsi que tu n'ailles point
Choisir tes mots sans quelque méprise:
Rien de plus cher que la chanson grise
Où l'Indécis au Précis se joint.

. . . . . .

Car nous voulons la Nuance encor,
Pas la Couleur, rien que la nuance!
Oh! la nuance seule fiance
Le rêve au rêve et la flûte au cor.

[1] Que ton vers soit la bonne aventure
Éparse au vent crispé du matin
Qui va fleurant la menthe et le thym . . .
Et tout le reste est littérature.

i blue, *o* red, and *u* yellow;" while another theorist of onomatopœia, Rimbaud, indignantly avers that any decadent ought to know that "*i* is red, *o* blue, and *u* green." Not content with this, they have discovered a pre-established harmony between vowel sounds and musical instruments: "*a* is the organ, *e* the harp, *i* the violin, *o* the trumpet, and *u* the flute." Or, again, "*a* is monotony, *e* serenity, *i* passion and prayer, *o* glory, and *u* the ingenuous smile," though not because that is what might naturally end such an *ars poetica*, for the diphthongs have their significance also, and even combinations of vowel and consonant are not neglected in Rimbaud's Symbolist "Gradus ad Parnassum."[1]

Verlaine does not go to these extremes, nor do any but the mountebanks among the Symbolists follow this will-o'-the-wisp except to attract attention or show their virtuosity. But Verlaine is always a poet of impulse or instinct, and is only just to himself when he asserts[2] that verse is to him a spontaneous expression of feeling, conscious of no literary tradition and developing no consecutive thought. Hence comes his indifference to the consecrated literary usages of words. They have not the same meaning for him that they would have to a poet of literary training, and yet his ear delights in them. As Lemaître suggests, it is as though he had entered the Parnassian Cénacle, had listened to those tuneful disciples of art for art, and then had left their company "intoxicated by the music of their words, but by their music alone." The same writer concludes his delicate, sympathetic, yet searching diagnosis of this morbid spirit with the antitheti-

[1] Cp. Rimbaud, Traité du verbe, and Brunetière, Poésie lyrique, ii. 243.

[2] Cp. Huret, L'Enquête littéraire.

cally balanced judgment: "Verlaine has the senses of a sick man, but the soul of a child; he has a naïve charm in his unhealthy languor; he is a decadent who has in him most of the primitive man."

Like Baudelaire and like Banville, Verlaine and the decadents more or less closely related to him suffer from a morbid singularity, the overstimulation of individualism inherited from the bankruptcy of Romanticism. Hence the line of their development would naturally be lyric poetry. But to those who are anxiously watching the signs in the literary heavens there seems small promise in this school of any permanent advance in the art or mechanism of song. They stand for reaction from the coldly formal objectivity of the Parnassians, and their value to the next generation will probably seem to be that they reasserted the rightful place in lyric poetry of individuality and idealism. For this they will be remembered, while their licenses in language and rhythm will sooner be forgotten than forgiven.

CHAPTER X.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE DRAMA.[1]

THE drama of modern France is not a development of the Romantic movement, still less a reversion to the classical type as it was understood by Ponsard and his School of Good Sense. It owes much to Diderot and the dramatic reformers of the eighteenth century, and more than it is always willing to confess, to Scribe, who, while the psychological comedy of social satire was awaiting its development, transfigured the humble vaudeville into the legitimate drama. During the generation that separates the first from the third Napoleon Scribe was without a rival in popular favor, and the fertility and rapidity of his production seemed to leave no demand unsatisfied.[2] Perhaps no other playwright has ever enjoyed so long an undisputed pre-eminence or reaped such rich rewards. But the cause of his success is also the cause of the shade of mocking contempt with which it is now the literary

[1] For the statistics of the modern stage Soubies, La Comédie-Française depuis l'époque romantique, 1824–1895, is invaluable. All the dramatists named in this chapter and many others are discussed in Lemaître, Impressions de théâtre, 8 vols.

[2] Scribe was born in 1791, and died in 1861. Some four hundred of his pieces have been collected in seventy-six volumes. For critical appreciations see Lanson, p. 966; Brunetière, Époques du théâtre, p. 349; Sainte-Beuve, Portraits contemporains, ii. 91 and 589; Weiss, Le théâtre et les mœurs, p. 3.

fashion to dismiss him. It must be admitted that Scribe never seeks to rise above the philistine realism of his audience. There is a smug worldliness about the plays as there was about the man. Virtue with him must always be rewarded in current coin, a *dot* is the highest adornment of beauty, to get on in the world is the chief end of the human race. There is a frankly naïve confession of the dramatist's philosophy of life in the inscription on his palatial house at Sérincourt, which one may render thus: —

> The stage has procured this retreat for the poet.
> Passer, my thanks, for to you I may owe it.

He had no higher ambition than to give the public what it wanted, and as much as it would take at his price.

Yet Scribe plays an important part in the evolution of the drama, for he understood the art of the playwright as hardly another has done. Each incident that came to his notice took a dramatic form in his mind. Just as a slight shock will induce some saturated solution to a crystallization that is almost instantaneous, so the least hint sufficed to set a new dramatic situation in the kaleidoscope of Scribe's mind. Legouvé tells us that he turned the mediocre five-act tragedy of "La Chanoinesse" into a lively one-act farce while the author was reading it to him. He would remodel on the spot a play whose rehearsal showed a lack of telling effects. A mere hint sufficed him, and the joint authorship so frequently noted on the titlepages of his plays often amounted to no more than that. More than one writer was astonished to receive a share of fame and profit for work in which he could not recognize his paternity. But Scribe was as particular in

this regard as Dumas had been careless. He looked at the matter as an honorable dramatic craftsman, the artisan of art for profit rather than the artist of art for truth, and so he made friends of all his rivals.

His supremacy lay, as Vitet says, in "the gift of discovering at every step, almost with no occasion, theatrical combinations of new and striking effect." The spectator feels the fascination and the succeeding mental vacancy of a juggling exhibition, that leaves in his mind, as Dumas *fils* has put it in one of his dogmatic prefaces, "neither an idea, nor a reflection, nor an enthusiasm, nor a hope, nor a remorse, nor disgust, nor ease. You have looked, listened, been puzzled, laughed, wept, passed the evening, been amused. This is much, but you have learned nothing."

Such technical skill as this is no title to literary fame. Scribe made his first shrewd appeal to the public ear by flattering the moneyed aristocracy of the Restoration while he soothed the wounded pride of his country by delicate allusions to the glories of the Empire. His best work was done after the Revolution of 1830 had given alike freedom and occasion for mild political persiflage that has indeed hardly a trace of the strength or seriousness of satire.[1] A standing resort in these plays is to contrast the new democratic with the old aristocratic spirit, a dramatic conflict that has now almost wholly yielded to the frank recognition of democracy in the drama of modern society.[2] Scribe, then, was in no way a reformer or

[1] For instance: Bertrand et Raton, 1833; La Camaraderie, 1837; Le Verre d'eau, 1840; Une Chaîne, 1841; Adrienne Lecouvreur, 1849; Bataille de dames, 1851.

[2] One may find it still in Ohnet's Maître des forges, and in Sandeau's Mademoiselle de la Seiglière.

even an originator. He was too much of a materialist and philistine to have any close affiliation with the idealism of the Romanticists, the playful poetry of De Musset, or the unbridled fancy of Dumas. It was a degraded form of drama into which he expanded the vaudeville. His local color is careless, his delineation of character is weak; and yet he was a necessary factor in the dramatic development; for the realistic satirists of the next generation, who took their spirit from Balzac, learned from Scribe, and could have learned from him alone, that mastery of the art and routine of theatrical presentation which has given France its unquestioned leadership in the drama.

This supremacy has been won by few, — by Augier, Dumas *fils*, Sardou; it has been maintained by many excellent playwrights, among whom Feuillet, Pailleron, and Labiche have shown the most marked individuality. The new note was first struck and nobly maintained by Émile Augier, whose best work the public voice already recognizes as classic and worthy to endure. He it was who, when comedy was in danger of being stifled between Scribe's pretentious vaudeville and the equally pretentious Romantic sensational drama, restored it, with the help of Dumas *fils*, to a life more vigorous and more moral, more realistic, more truly contemporary, than French literature had known since the time of Molière,[1] reflecting in this the powerful influence of the novels of Balzac, that unfortunately did not make itself felt till their author was beyond the consolations of appreciation.

Augier's work, however, is not homogeneous, and must therefore be considered chronologically. He had been trained in Paris for the law, and in this profession he

[1] Cp. Lanson, p. 1041 sqq.

began his career.[1] But he had inherited from his mother, the daughter of the prolific novelist and dramatist Pigault-Lebrun, a bent for literature, so that the law seemed to him a *triste harnais*, as he says in "La Jeunesse," impeding the flight of his genius. He stole time from his profession to write "Charles VII. in Naples," a drama on the already unfashionable Romantic lines, that found no favor with managers and probably deserved none. He was undiscouraged by this check, however; and his second piece, "La Ciguë" showed the result of the collapse of Hugo's "Burgraves" in the preceding year, by its dignified self-restraint, though it still lacked realistic strength. Ponsard now saw in Augier a welcome recruit to the School of Good Sense, and as amended by his practised hand "La Ciguë" achieved a success that decided the dramatist's career.

This classical play, in regular but somewhat pedestrian verse, is full of grace and playful wit, but, as the title implies, Greek in scene, and with very little trace of the peculiar mint-stamp that marks Augier's later work; while a second classical play, "Le Joueur

[1] Born 1820, died 1889. Théâtre (7 vols.). Dates of production of the principal plays: La Ciguë, 1844; Un Homme de bien, 1845; L'Aventurière, 1848; Gabrielle, 1849; Le Joueur de flûte, 1850; Diane, 1852; La Pierre de touche, 1853; Philiberte, 1853; Le Mariage d'Olympe, 1855; Le Gendre de M. Poirier, 1855; Ceinture Dorée, 1855; La Jeunesse, 1858; Les Lionnes pauvres, 1858; Un Beau mariage, 1859; Les Effrontés, 1861; Le Fils de Giboyer, 1862; Maître Guérin, 1864; La Contagion, 1866; Paul Forestier, 1868; Lions et renards, 1869; Le Postscriptum, 1869; Jean de Thommeray, 1873; Mademoiselle Caverlet, 1876; Les Fourchambault, 1878.

Critical essays: Parigot, Émile Augier (Classiques populaires); Lacour, Trois théâtres (Augier, Dumas, Sardou); Matthews, French Dramatists; Sarrazin, Moderne Drama der Franzosen; Doumic, Portraits d'écrivains, 57.

de flûte," that may well date from this time though it was not acted till much later, takes up the parable of "Marion de Lorme" and directly contradicts the fundamental thesis of his greater dramas. This contradiction is repeated in "L'Aventurière," the tale of another frail but rehabilitated heroine, who in her striving for a place among the *femmes sérieuses* divides at least the sympathy of the hearers, — a sympathy that when his eyes were opened by Dumas' "Dame aux camélias," Augier became most zealous to deny. Still, the attentive reader might have discovered passages even here that indicated his coming vocation as the defender of the integrity of the family, which is the main thesis of his second manner; and to emphasize these he rewrote the play in 1860. That he was still feeling his way to the proper field for the exercise of his dramatic talent is suggested by "L'Habit vert," a witty trifle in which De Musset had a share. But his genius was too serious to succeed in this *genre*, and if he recurred to it twenty years later in "Le Post-scriptum," it was only to register a second failure.

The reaction from Romantic idealism is first strongly marked in "Gabrielle," though in this "domestic drama" there is enough idealization left to make the poetic form appropriate. Indeed, "Gabrielle" is almost a hymn to the fireside, and reveals Augier to us as a social moralist, the champion, as a rather ill-natured critic put it, of "the average and conventional ethics, that knows how to ally the calculation of interest to the language of sentiment," which, taking the world as it goes, is not such a very bad thing. At any rate, it was precisely what the Romanticists had never known how to do. They might and did mock the bourgeois sentiment of the closing line of "Ga-

brielle": "O père de famille! O poète, je t'aime;" but the Academy consoled him with the Monthyon prize. The wit of "Gabrielle" was undeniable, and one sees first in it a promise of the serious, forceful purpose that marks his masterpieces. Yet the next steps were hesitating. In "Diane" he seemed to revert for a moment to Romantic methods in an historical drama that shows the last traces of the virus of "Marion de Lorme." Then in "Philiberte" he tried his hand at the *préciosité* of the eighteenth century, guarding the unities with a stringency that might warm the heart of Boileau, but showing a noteworthy advance in technical skill and a still greater development of his psychological insight in the affectionate care with which he unfolds the character of his girl-heroine.

Augier now began to work in collaboration with the novelist Jules Sandeau,[1] whose gentler humor may have softened somewhat the growing sternness of the social satirist. Directly these plays, "La Pierre de touche" and "Le Gendre de M. Poirier," probably owed little to Sandeau; but they mark the cardinal point in Augier's dramatic career. From this time he almost wholly abandoned verse, and his fame would lose nothing if he had abandoned it entirely. This change from the School of Good Sense to the good sense of no school involved or induced an equal change in the character of the dramas, which became more virile and realistic. Augier had still many steps to take, but he took none so vital as that which separates

[1] Born 1811; died 1882. His best novels, "Mademoiselle de la Seiglière," "La Chasse au roman," "Sacs et parchemins," "La Maison de Penarvan," and several more, were dramatized with the aid of Augier and others.

"Philiberte" from "Le Gendre de M. Poirier." On the other hand, "La Pierre de touche" is interesting chiefly as a sort of "touchstone" by which to test the contribution of Sandeau to the evolution of the greater dramatist's genius. His "L'Héritage" furnishes the situation, which is the opposition of the genuine artist to the pretender. The subject is not essentially dramatic, and only a strong analysis of character could save the play from sinking to the commonplace. This Augier could not yet give, and his lavish wit did not save the situation. In "Le Gendre de M. Poirier," however, he took only the fundamental idea from Sandeau, and without direct collaboration worked under the immediate inspiration of Molière's "Bourgeois gentilhomme" and "George Dandin."

"Le Gendre de M. Poirier" has been called "the finest French comedy since the 'Mariage de Figaro,'" and it is generally regarded by the dramatic critics of France as the model of their comedy of manners. It is indeed an "honest, healthy, and hardy" satire on the plutocracy which under the bourgeois king Louis Philippe had at last won the social prominence that it had claimed since the days of Le Sage's "Turcaret." M. Poirier is a retired cloth-merchant, a millionaire, whose ambition is the peerage. With him is contrasted Gaston, a bankrupt nobleman, to whom the ambitious Poirier has given his daughter Antoinette, while nobler phases of the aristocracy and of commercial life are presented in the Duke and Verdelet. These five clearly marked types are the only important characters, a dramatic economy in striking contrast to the former excess of Scribe and the present superfluity of Sardou. It is in these characters, not in the plot, that the comic force of the play rests.

Almost every speech of Poirier throws new light on a nature true to life in all its many-sidedness, and the touch of the artist is not less kindly than keen, while the most sparkling humor scintillates through all. These men, like all of Augier's greater creations, are complex, made up of nobler and baser elements, so that the study of them is a lesson in charity. Gaston is no idealized hero of romance. His mocking *blague* in the earlier acts accompanies conduct neither righteous nor noble, but the good in him wins sympathy from the first. So the contrast between the virtues of the Duke and of Verdelet sheds a kindly light on the limitations of each. Antoinette, in whose bourgeois soul trial develops the dignity of true nobility, may be artistically less great, but she is always charming; and so this comedy realizes the old maxim, *castigat ridendo*, and there is nothing bitter in the laughter it evokes.[1]

That bitterness came, however, when Augier attacked vices more corroding than aristocratic vanity and bourgeois ambition. "Ceinture dorée" shows how a woman's wealth may be a barrier to her domestic happiness, especially in France, where, more than elsewhere, marriage for money is an obvious butt for satire. "How unlucky," says his heroine, "for a statue to be of gold and not of marble! How unfortunate when the material is more prized than the workmanship, when one marries a woman for her dowry without so much question of her character as one would make in engaging a domestic! I am proud, and I will not be taken at hap-hazard." Yet the marriage of her choice is denied her till the wheel of fortune has deprived her father of his tainted wealth.

[1] A fuller analysis of this comedy may be found in my own edition of it, Boston, 1896 (Heath).

This drama of the stock-exchange has a peculiar interest, for it prefigures in 1855 those social satires that begin six years later with "Les Effrontés," though Augier was still willing to accept final conversions, and had not risen to the sterner realism of Vernouillet and Guérin. A step toward this truer ethical position is marked by "Le Mariage d'Olympe," a tragedy of the marriage of a social interloper with a man of noble blood and plebeian instincts, in which the dramatist does frank penance for his "Joueur de flûte." Here he takes up the gauntlet of "Marion de Lorme" and "La Dame aux camélias," and shows the social peril that lies in the rehabilitation of the courtesan. For the morbid sentiment of Romantic sympathy, he substituted a healthy common-sense; he replaced their "virginity of the soul" with his "homesickness for the gutter," and with keen analysis and admirable illustration, he pointed a course that Dumas had somewhat feebly indicated two years before in "Diane de Lys." This play was an immense advance over "Gabrielle" in vital power; and the Academy, that had accorded the former the rather doubtful honor of a "virtue prize," welcomed to their number, in 1858, the author of "Le Mariage d'Olympe," which indeed did more than any other one thing to banish sentimental sympathy for this form of vice from the French stage for the rest of the century..

His next play, "La Jeunesse," showed more versatility than discretion, being a somewhat sentimental threnody on the disadvantages of youth, that "used to be force, dominion, but now is feebleness, obstacle, exclusion," so that even ardent passion barely rescues men from the fatal *mariage de convenance*. The whole is insignificant, and its chief interest lies in the allu-

sions to the overcrowding of the learned professions, for they show that the dangers of a literary proletariat were felt in France even before 1860. A much stronger echo of the "Ceinture dorée," however, could be heard in "Beau mariage," which also reflects the scientific interests of the epoch, though it lacks the psychological continuity and delicate characterization of "Poirier;" but already "Les Lionnes pauvres" had shown a far riper and firmer art, and must rank with "Poirier" as the best of the "domestic dramas."

This play, whose title we may render "Poor Ladies of Fashion," had been originally called "Les Femmes du monde entretenues." But the censors of the Second Empire objected to the name, perhaps because they were so tolerant of the thing. It is a fearless, and in no small degree successful, effort to paint the effect of the restless reaching out for material gratification that characterized the middle class of Paris, and indeed of the Continent generally, in the heyday of the Third Napoleon. But the play was too bold, and touched too many sensitive chords in the public of the Parisian theatre, to permit it to gain immediate popularity. It was the first drama of its kind, and the close aroused a too painful tragic fear. Nor has it ever been frequently acted, though always highly esteemed, for similar plays soon learned from it an art that made it seem less realistic than they. It contains, however, Augier's greatest female character, Séraphine, "cold, cowardly, and perversely selfish," the counterpart and prototype of Daudet's Sidonie,[1] both in her character and her fate, as she sinks from the limbo of the *lionnes pauvres* to the inferno of insolent corruption. Thus Augier rejects the conventional *deus ex machina* to

[1] Fromont jeune et Risler ainé.

punish vice and reward virtue. The censors had demanded that he should show Séraphine scourged with small-pox, a device afterward attempted by Zola in "Nana;" but the vision that he opens to us of the inevitable future of the newly launched *cascadeuse* inspires a truer and deeper dread of destiny.

The longing for wealth without effort, for unearned enjoyment, is not new, but it is most seen in materialistic epochs such as that of the Second Empire, and its manifestations are as clear and as dangerous in society as in the family. So the dramatist is naturally led from "Les Lionnes pauvres" to "Les Effrontés," the unprincipled speculators, developed in another sphere by the same social virus that produced Séraphine. Skilfully adapting to his purpose the then recent scandal of the banker De Mirès, Augier made his Vernouillet a type of the schemer who grazes, and occasionally oversteps the verge of legality while retaining the toleration of a lax society. The Figaro of the eighteenth century has risen many grades in the social sphere, thanks to democracy and materialism. He has become less sentimental, he is incapable of an unselfish love, he sacrifices self-respect to *blague*. And by the side of this social flower Augier places the Marquis d'Auberive, who sees in Vernouillet the most dangerous nightshade blossom of modern democracy, and cynically aids him, "amusing himself by fomenting the corruption of the bourgeoisie."

To advance his schemes and avenge his spites, the social adventurer can find no better means than to own a newspaper; on whose staff he employs the "revolver-journalist" Giboyer, a typical literary pretorian, whose biting pen is for sale to the highest bidder of whatever party, who must live by his wits since these have been

educated at the expense of his conscience; a man who "would scourge his own father with epigrams for a modest remuneration," the fit tool of the aristocratic pessimist and of the democrat educated to tastes that he cannot satisfy. But the plot of this triple alliance for the degradation of society is wholly subordinate to the development of these characteristic products of our modern democracy.

"Les Effrontés" aroused interest and excited comment, but the "Fils de Giboyer" soon stirred a far more acrimonious opposition by its plain though masked allusions to that valiant knight of the pen Louis Veuillot.[1] Here the press as an engine of blackmail and corruption is still the theme, but the satire is directed largely against the successful men of business whom capital has turned into timid conservatives, tools of the abler nobility and of their unscrupulous clerical allies. The interest centres in this triangular struggle between a decaying aristocracy, a vain commercial plutocracy, and an increasing body of men who are determined or compelled to live by their wits. In a series of vivid scenes, the Parisian sees the conflict of his modern society revealed to him with sparkling wit and unfailing dramatic interest, that are likely to make this drama one of the most enduring of our time.

Less sensational but as earnest and profound is "Maître Guérin" whose central figure, a country lawyer, is pronounced by French criticism to be "perhaps the most original and clear-cut character that our comedy has given us since Molière." Unfortunately the presentation of Guérin's wife and son shows regret-

[1] A certain De Mirécourt saw fit to identify himself with Giboyer's son, and answered in a scurrilous volume, "Le Petit-fils de Pigault-Lebrun."

table concessions to the sentimental and melodramatic tricks of Scribe. The Deroncerets, father and daughter, victims of his chicane, are obviously inspired by an affectionate study of Balzac's "Recherche de l'absolu." But when the lawyer has tricked the old man out of the last remnant of his property, salving his conscience by strict adherence to the letter of the law, he is as puzzled as Poirier to find the success of his schemes thwarted by the moral revolt of his wife and son. Yet, though puzzled, he is not repentant. For the Guérins and the Vernouillets of society, men having their consciences seared with a hot iron, Augier seems to say there is no repentance.

Except for the single character of Guérin, this play marks a retrogression that was accentuated by "Paul Forestier," whose character seems too weak to justify the sacrifice by which his wife wins back his affection. Augier was never to surpass "Giboyer," but it was in this kind that he was still to do his best work; and in creating the D'Estrigaud of "La Contagion" and "Lions et renards" he drew a character not unworthy to stand beside the four pillars of his fame, Poirier, Séraphine, Vernouillet, and Giboyer.

The "contagion" of modern society is the desire of wealth without work, — a spirit that, as Augier shows, saps all idealism, public patriotism, and private honor. It is the spirit of *blague*, already reproved in "Poirier," — a spirit before which nothing is sacred, — the Mephistophelian spirit that enamels our overstrained consciences with its skeptical Pyrrhonism, mocks at duty and virtue, and answers every noble aspiration with a sneer. This *blague*, that infects even generous souls, is personified here in the stock-gambler D'Estrigaud, who defeats himself at last because healthy com-

mon-sense morality revolts at the logical results of his social and ethical system. "You have gangrened my honor," says André, "but your sting can be cured, like others, with cautery. Farewell, gentlemen. You may make litter of all that we respect, — conscience, duty, family; but the day will come when these outraged truths will reassert themselves in thunder." He recoils from the abyss of moral degradation, and even the demi-mondaine Navarette holds herself too good to marry the discredited *blagueur*. But André has scotched the snake, not killed it; and D'Estrigaud reappears in "Lions et renards" as the rival of a disguised Jesuit in pursuit of the wealth of an heiress. This play has several scenes of delicious humor for the like of which we must go back to "Poirier." At last the *blagueur* is so impressed with his adversary's deft unscrupulousness that he pays him the homage of imitation and turns Jesuit himself, thus pointing the author's anti-clerical moral.

This moral the Franco-German War soon enforced with terrible emphasis. Outraged truth did indeed "reassert itself in thunder." And after Sardou had voiced his feelings in "Le Roi Carotte," an opera-bouffe of more than wonted vacuity, after Dumas *fils* had offered the public the unsavory diet of his "Visite de noces," the serious Augier presented in "Jean de Thommeray" a patriotic sequel to "La Contagion," interesting for its attempt to identify the integrity of the family with that of the state, though unfortunately one of the least inspired of his later dramas. Indeed, Augier had now reached what economists would call the "stationary state." "Madame Caverlet" and "Les Fourchambault" are pieces that bear the stamp of the master, but they do not rise to the height of

Giboyer and D'Estrigaud nor to the serener air of Poirier. The former deals with divorce, and doubtless contributed its quota to the legislative changes that were soon to follow.[1] It has an extraordinary vigor of dialogue, and some of the scenes are of the greatest power, but the public was probably right in thinking that it lacked interest as a whole. "Les Fourchambault" deserved and gained more favor. Indeed, the piece is among the most compactly constructed and vigorously executed of all Augier's dramas. He here trenches on the special preserve of Dumas, and places in the foremost rank an illegitimate son, whom he uses to contrast the strength of character that comes from the necessity of winning one's way with the effeminating influences of assured ease and luxury. The chief blot on the play is the melodramatic sentiment of the close. It marks in 1878 the reaction, that we shall trace presently in the novel, from thoroughgoing Naturalism, which might then have seemed at its height, though, from our present position, we can see that it was already showing signs of approaching decline.

If we regard Augier's work as a whole, his early verses will show a plastic ease and daring use of metaphor that recall the traditions of Romanticism, and reappear in his later prose in vigorous turns and in strong and startling comparisons. He does not shrink from the slang of the boulevard or the boudoir when it suits his purpose; and if he is less profuse and more methodical in his resort to these neologisms than Dumas, yet quite a full nosegay of them may be gathered even by the reader who skims the conversation of Giboyer and D'Estrigaud. But no contem-

[1] For a résumé of the divorce legislation of France, see Report of the U. S. Commissioner of Labor, 1889, pp. 1004–1007.

porary dramatist has a sterner or loftier conception of his vocation than Augier. He is convinced that "the drama is the most active if not the most nutritive part of literature," and keeps ever before his eyes the education of his public. He sacrifices nothing to show with Sardou, nor to declamation with Dumas. This very earnestness makes him sometimes hard and bitter, for, as he makes André say in "La Contagion," "some bites must be cured with cautery;" but beside his D'Estrigaud and Vernouillet, beside Maître Guérin and Giboyer, beside Séraphine and Olympe, there are men and women full of noble hopefulness and aspiration, whose masculine virtue and feminine dignity seem more admirable and less commonplace than these homely qualities appear in the hands of any other modern dramatist. And, as has been said, even his reprobation is mingled with pity. Vice with him is almost always the distortion of virtue. He has a peculiarly catholic, broad-minded vision that gives a pathos to the limitations of a Poirier or a Pommeau, that sees the world neither *en rose* nor *en gris*, but with the honest sympathy of a true student of nature. Upright and downright, he leaves on the mind the impression of serious humor and keen irony that compel respect, together with robust loyalty and sound honesty that inspire trust.

Next to Augier in critical esteem if not in popular favor stands the son of Alexandre Dumas; but a greater contrast than that between the authors of "Monte Cristo" and of the "Demi-monde" it might be hard to find in the history of literature. The father's unscrupulous, rich, romantic fancy gave place to the close observation and realistic earnestness of the son. But the whole family history had been full of

contradictions, epigrammatically summed up in the words of Anatole France:[1] "A poor negress, thrown into the arms of a colonist at St. Domingo, conceives a hero, who begets in his turn a colossus, whose son educated in the theatres of Paris stirs consciences there with exemplary rudeness and unheard-of audacity."

This unbending moralist[2] was a natural son, and has drawn in "L'Affaire Clémenceau" a moving picture of the torments caused by this origin during his school life. His father had indeed recognized him, and, school days over, the boy became immediately the companion and associate of this still youthful high-liver, who was then in the zenith of his prosperity. The son naturally followed the father's example, and in 1848 found himself some 50,000 francs in debt. It was a rude awakening, but with prompt decision he took leave of his old associates and sold his experience to the world in "La Dame aux camélias." From that day he became a serious, hard-working author, first to pay his debts, then to gratify a legitimate ambition, and to have his say on the questions of the day. But his early novels, with the single ex-

[1] La Vie littéraire, i. 29.

[2] Born 1824; died 1895. Théâtre complet (7 vols.). Dates of principal pieces: Dame aux camélias, 1852; Diane de Lys, 1853; Demi-monde, 1855; Question d'argent, 1857; Fils naturel, 1858; Père prodigue, 1859; Ami des femmes, 1864; Idées de Mme. Aubray, 1867; Visite de noces, 1871; Princesse Georges, 1871; Femme de Claude, 1873; M. Alphonse, 1873; L'Étrangère, 1876; Princesse de Bagdad, 1881; Denise, 1885; Francillon, 1887. Novels: Dame aux camélias, 1848; L'Affaire Clémenceau, 1867, and many others. Plays revised by Dumas are collected in Théâtre des autres (1894). He had a share in "Supplice d'une femme" (1865) and "Danicheffs (1876); and his own "Clémenceau" was dramatized by D'Artois in 1887.

Criticism: Bourget, Essais de psychologie contemporaine; Lacour, Trois théâtres; Matthews, French Dramatists; Sarrazin, Das moderne Drama der Franzosen; Doumic, Portraits d'écrivains.

ception of this realistic study of the life and death of the consumptive courtesan Alphonsine Plessis, have little value for the study of his literary development. Like his first dramatic attempt,[1] these tales are essentially Romantic, a natural reflection of the manner of the elder Dumas.

Lack of money produced the "Dame aux camélias," and four years later the same powerful motive led Dumas to his true vocation by inducing him to dramatize it, a feat performed in eight days. His play was indeed refused a license till the Empire came to set a more liberal standard of theatrical morals, but once produced it achieved immediate success. February 2, 1852, is a true milestone in the history of the French stage; for Dumas' drama marked a revolution as profound and more lasting than the Romantic, though it had come with none of the pompous heralding of "Hernani." It was the beginning of the realistic study of social problems that has changed the face of the modern drama. Balzac had seen the need, but had not the necessary knowledge of the stage to achieve success. To his keen insight into character Dumas added an innate aptness for the technique of Scribe. He tells us in a frank preface how he started out resolute and free in search of truth, but inspired less by poetic fervor than by need of money, and therefore perhaps the more careful to remember that for its successful presentation this dramatic truth must be shown conventionally, logically. So from the first he developed his pieces according to strict sequence, and he has known how to answer the Naturalists who have blamed him for this sacrifice of theoretic realism with convincing vigor and biting acerbity.

[1] In 1845. It was reprinted as a curiosity in 1868.

"The Lady with the Camelias" is a study from the life of an acquaintance of the author, a lady of easy virtue, who loves in the Marion de Lorme fashion with a "virginity of the heart," and sacrifices her life to her affection. "Much shall be forgiven her, for she loved truly," is the conclusion of the author. The subject dates back to Prévost's novel "Manon Lescaut," and had been dramatized by Palissot in 1782, but neither of these writers had ventured wholly to rehabilitate the courtesan. Then Hugo, both in "Marion" and in "Les Misérables," had gone a step farther in his Romantic sympathy, and now Dumas opened wide the arms of society to the penitent. It was a time of social ferment, when a theory needed only to be extravagant to find imitators. For several years the stage abounded with these festering lilies until common-sense returned, as we have seen, with Augier's "Mariage d'Olympe," which taught a harder though a truer social philosophy. But it is not in its social ethics that the importance of Dumas' play lies, but in its naturalism, in its presentation of present social conditions and characters with a reality that the Romanticists had not desired, nor the Neo-Classicists approached.

The strength of this play remained Dumas' permanent possession; its ethical vagaries were speedily abandoned. Already in "Diane de Lys" the author showed a little of the satiric misogynist, and in the henpecked Taupin created a standing butt of the Parisian humorous journals, while he was ready now to defend the integrity of the family with a pistol, as Augier did two years later in "Olympe," which was a much stronger piece of work in spite of this lame conclusion. But Dumas had now found his vocation.

All the dramas that follow are written with a purpose and to prove some social thesis, the more paradoxical the better. And that there may be no mistake about it, nearly all of the thirteen are provided with prefaces of considerable length, where the author takes the spectator into his confidence and argues with him in easy, forceful prose, — always, he assures you, with perfect frankness, and sometimes perhaps with too little restraint, as when in his pursuit of social reform he is eager to pull aside the veil from body as well as mind, and degrades love to the level of physiological pathology.

For woman — that is, the baleful influence of modern love — is his perennial theme, which he twists and turns and views from every side. He would eradicate from the youth of France the false sentiment of Romantic passion and chivalrous love, and so emancipate the coming generation for a more independent, virile development. Like his *Ami des femmes* he has "made up his mind never to give his honor, heart, or life to be devoured by those charming, terrible little creatures, for whom we ruin, dishonor, and kill ourselves, and whose sole occupation in the midst of this universal carnage is to dress now like umbrellas and now like bells." This note of warning is the burden throughout. It is the avowed purpose of the "Demi-monde," "L'Ami des femmes," "Une Visite de noces," "La Princesse Georges," "La Femme de Claude," and "L'Étrangère." It is present, though masked, in "Le Père prodigue," a half-autobiographical drama of education, and in "Le Fils naturel," a study of illegitimacy. It colors "Les Idées de Mme. Aubray" of which the ostensible theme is the rehabilitation of a fallen woman, and casts a faint shadow even on "La Question

d'argent," that both in subject and treatment suggests Augier's "Effrontés."

The first of these, "Le Demi-monde," had the curious fortune to give its name, a coinage of the author, to a class of persons with whom it has nothing whatever to do. His *demi-monde* is made up of those who have been members of society, but have abandoned or forfeited their place in it without sinking to the rank of courtesans. He tells us in his preface how society's first exile "mourned her shame in secret till the second came to console her. Then, when there were three, they asked one another to dinner, and when there were four they had a *contredanse*. Around them gathered young girls who had started in life with a fault, false widows . . . and all the women who want to make believe that they are something and do not want to appear what they are." That is the *demi-monde*, a social zone that Dumas claimed to have discovered, and certainly explored with great keenness and unflinching realism in the treatment of individual characters, though the construction of the drama is open to criticism and its close is a bit of legerdemain unworthy of a serious dramatic situation. Moreover here, as indeed in all his plays, Dumas treats the prejudices of his hearers and the conventions of society with a persistent neglect on which no other dramatist would venture.

Perhaps the chief interest to-day in the stock-gambling comedy "La Question d'argent" is that it marks and illustrates the rising power of the speculative plutocracy during the first decade of the Empire. Here the humor is frankly comic. In the "Fils naturel" it is more caustic, differing in this, as in the pathetic delicacy of the intrigue and the courageous

ingenuity of the close, from the drama of Diderot that its title and manner suggest. Very much the same might be said of "Le Père prodigue," an illustration of the well-worn maxim that "there is no fool like an old fool," especially when the French conventional marriage is in question. But both of these plays yield in interest to a third drama of character in Diderot's manner, "Les Idées de Mme. Aubray," where we are invited to study the social and matrimonial eligibility of a girl who has been betrayed into a single repented error. Madame Aubray finds Jeanne a desirable match for her own young hopeful, Camille. This dénouement is pronounced by one of the characters at the close to be "pretty steep," and this seems to be the popular judgment, in spite of Dumas' eloquent preface, where, however, it is significant to note that for the first time he lets the preacher get the upper hand of the playwright, and seems more anxious to commend his social eccentricity or moral paradox than to prove the excellence of the drama itself. This shifting of the relation between art and ethics is perpetuated in nearly all the later plays, and thus gives Dumas a dramatic position that is quite unique.

The main element in "M. Alphonse," for instance, is an appeal to the public to abandon one of its most deeply rooted prejudices. The individual characters are sympathetic, and the play is almost faultless in structure; but these merits are almost overshadowed by its perverse sociology. We are puzzled rather than convinced by this tale of six years of calm wedded life, followed by the discovery that the wife has a half-grown daughter, whom the husband is finally suffered to adopt, though not without some competition for the doubtful honor.

Alternating with these dramas of characters or states, are four plays that continue the investigation begun in "Demi-monde," and already ably treated in Augier's "Lionnes pauvres." There is, however, a cynical tone in the treatment of marriage, both in "L'Ami des femmes," which an outraged spectator is said to have proclaimed "disgusting," and "Une Visite de noces," which its author has aptly characterized as "a psycho-philosophical chemical analysis." And this makes rather disheartening reading of both these pessimistic pictures of the dust and ashes of relations that, as the heroine of the latter play remarks, "began because I was bored, and ended because he bored me." "La Princesse Georges" was more ambitious and more healthy; but even this needed a pistol-shot to clear the air at the close, which was, again, a lame and impotent conclusion. Dumas resorted to it once more, however, in "La Femme de Claude," whose thesis is that husbands should kill their adulterous wives, — a view that the author took so much to heart as to defend it in an eloquent preface, and in a pamphlet, "L'Homme-Femme," which amused many and convinced none. It may be observed, however, that the doctrine is only that of Augier's "Olympe" in its baldest form.

Men might regret Dumas' ethical eccentricities, but they could not close their eyes to his talent, and in 1875 he was elected to the Academy. As a consequence of this, his next dramatic sermon was written for the Théâtre Français and for Sarah Bernhardt, while the previous plays had been produced at the less serious Gymnase. In "L'Étrangère" we are still in the *demi-monde*, but the whole is a curious *pastiche* of Augier's "Poirier." Mrs. Clarkson, the "stranger," is in this drama what Madame de

Montjaye was to Augier's, Antoinette is Catherine, Gaston is Septmonts, Poirier very nearly Moriceau. The god-father Verdelet becomes here the modest lover Gérard, which, to be sure, adds an element of complexity to the situation. One should note, too, that with Dumas both the wife and the rival are more prominent than with Augier, a difference that reflects the social changes of twenty years of democratic life. Augier's touch is more delicate, and his play is better constructed. Dumas' is more versatile and realistic, but it has far too much sermonizing, and again we have a violent dénouement. Catherine's unworthy lover cumbers the stage, but the *deus ex machina* of a fatal duel is a trite and unsatisfactory solution.

This play closes the collected edition of Dumas' works; and though he has since returned to the stage at rare intervals, he has touched no new chord. Indeed, "La Princesse de Bagdad" is distinguished among the author's dramas by a quite peculiar lack of good taste and common-sense;[1] "Denise" is a revamping of "M. Alphonse;" and "Francillon," while it shows a marked advance on these in the delineation of character, especially of the three men in the drama, shrinks from the full force of the situation it creates. We are allowed to suppose that the wife has resorted to the *lex talionis* to secure her husband's conjugal fidelity, and are ill edified to find that she has been shamming, so that the problem in which it was sought to interest us suddenly ceases to exist. Popular as "Francillon" has been at home and abroad, it lacks classic dignity, a fault shared in greater or less degree by all the dramatic work of Dumas.

For from first to last the wit of these plays is that

[1] See the elaborate analysis in "Revue bleue," April, 1895.

of the society they represent. It raises a laugh, but the laugh is not a kindly one. The language, too, is that of the salons, full of neologisms, and in the earlier plays of solecisms, though the Academician has removed these from the collected works. On the other hand, it is not the language of everybody. It has a wonderfully individual concision and clearness; it is "all muscles, nerves, and action." Passing from form to substance, Dumas appears both more and less of a realist than Augier, — more, if by realism we mean the daring that seeks veils in order to rend them, that has not only the courage but the yearning to "tell it all;" less, if by realism we mean the presentation of nature in its rounded completeness. The former represents the practice, if not the theory, of the self-styled Naturalists, so that it is not strange that Zola [1] should hail him as a forerunner, though he regretted his advocacy of *le théâtre utile* and the didactic tone in which this cynical painter of manners posed as a shepherd of souls. But Dumas was quite too much of an artist to accept the theory or care for the praise of the school of "human documents."

In Dumas there was a double nature. He shows us now the visionary social reformer, now the sardonic *blagueur*. No one can tell the measure of his sincerity when he offers his "Demi-monde" as a title to the Monthyon prize. But his moralizing, whether sincere or not, has the effect of making his characters abstract types, a pitfall that he saw and tried to avoid in "Francillon." Of this, the most striking instance is to be found in the apocalyptic vision of the Beast in the famous preface to "La Femme de Claude." These types seem sometimes to get possession of the drama-

[1] Roman expérimental, p. 134.

tist, so that he, who can create so readily when he will, repeats characters over and over, and with declared intent. He has told us himself that Gaston in the "Dame aux camélias," Maximilien of "Diane," and Olivier of the "Demi-monde" are studies of the same original, who reappears also as René in "La Question d'argent," and as M. de Ryons in "L'Ami des femmes;" and as though this were not enough, we recognize the familiar face in the Roger of the unacknowledged "Danicheffs."[1] So, again, Clémenceau's wife, Iza, is the Countess de Terremonde of "Princesse Georges" and the Valentine of "Demi-monde," as well as the incarnate "Beast" of the "Femme de Claude." And yet, with all reserves, after Augier, Dumas *fils* is the most purposeful, forceful, and serious of the contemporary dramatists of France.

But if Augier and Dumas learned much from Scribe, the mantle of his popularity fell to Sardou, a playwright of more tact and technical skill, but of far less genius than either. Sardou was a Parisian,[2] who, already in 1849, when a student of medicine, had essayed dramatic composition, from which family misfortunes soon forced him to seek a livelihood. But few who have achieved fame and fortune have had a

[1] Matthews, p. 147, uses the same obvious illustrations.

[2] Born 1831. Dates of his chief dramas: Les Pattes de mouche, 1861; Nos intimes, 1861; Les Ganaches, 1862; La Famille Benoiton, 1865; Nos bons villageois, 1866; Séraphine, 1868; Patrie, 1869; Fernande, 1870; Le Roi Carotte, 1871; Ragabas, 1872; Oncle Sam, 1873; La Haine, 1874; Dora, 1877; Les Bourgeois du pont d'Arcy, 1878; Daniel Rochat, 1880; Divorçons, 1880; Odette, 1881; Fédora, 1882; Théodora, 1884; Georgette, 1885; La Tosca, 1887; Thermidor, 1891; Madame Sans-Gêne, 1893; La Gismonda, 1894; Marcelle, 1895. The dramas since "Fédora" have not been published. Critical notices of Sardou may be found in the already cited works of Lacour, Doumic, and Matthews.

harder struggle up the hill of difficulty than he. Even when the kindness of Paul Féval, a writer of far inferior genius, had procured him a hearing, it was only to be hissed. Yet the repeated refusals of his dramas did not discourage his literary ambition. He gave private lessons, did hack work for the "Biographie générale," and wrote stories with tireless industry. Finally, on the strength of his repeated failures, he married, and his marriage was the "Open sesame" of his success; for it brought him the friendship of the actress Déjazet and of Vanderbuch, with whom he wrote several plays that brought money to Déjazet's theatre and the long-craved recognition to Sardou.

The stage of Paris was now open to him, and over it he led a swift succession of pieces, some twenty in five years. But his first real success was won by "Les Pattes de mouche," a comedy based on Poe's "Purloined Letter," which Baudelaire's translation had recently made familiar to French readers.[1] Here the intrigue revolves around a letter that is lost and found, put to the most various uses, and at last sets all right again. It was a shop-worn device; but Sardou has revamped it in "Fernande," in "Dora," and in "Fédora," and Pailleron has borrowed it for his "Monde où l'on s'ennuie." In "Les Pattes de mouche" the plot is perhaps too involved; but it was less for this than for its brilliant dialogue and as a *genre* picture of modern social life that it won lasting success, and set up a model for the inexhaustible fertility of its author. He had felt the bitterness of poverty and of popular indifference. Now that he had overcome both, he set himself to win notoriety and wealth. To please be-

[1] Poe's story has recrossed the Atlantic, disguised as "A Scrap of 'aper," essentially a translation of Sardou's play.

came his aim, and he hit his mark with almost unfailing sureness. But the barometer of the box-office gave the fairest augury when his satire of society was buoyant and keen. His public were willing to laugh at their foibles, but it must be with a light heart; and so Sardou is never serious or stern, with a single exception that proves the rule. The incompetence of the French democracy was hateful to his peculiar public, and that hate is reflected in the bitterness of "Les Ganaches" and of "Ragabas."

The great mass of Sardou's early plays has passed out of sight,[1] but "La Famille Benoiton" marks a growth in Naturalism, and a willingness to touch the social questions of the day, though less seriously than Augier, with whose "Lionnes pauvres" this series of realistic Parisian pictures may be fruitfully contrasted. The galled jades may have winced, but they must have smiled. Sardou's satire was never of a kind to offend his patrons, and he had already won their sympathy with a humorous attack on the democratic opposition to the Empire. He was a politician for revenue not for reform, though no doubt he sympathized with the Bonapartists from conviction as well as policy. His "Ganaches" brought him the coveted cross of the Legion of Honor; for the all-powerful Duc de Morny had, like Richelieu, a weakness for the stage, and a Napoleonic author was a genus rare enough to be cultivated with care. He returned the compliment with "Nos bons villageois," an urban satire on country politicians; but both of these political plays were cast

[1] "Nos intimes," once very popular and familiar to English readers under the various names, "Friends and Foes," "Bosom Friends," and "Peril," deserves mention as a clever satire on the busybodies of false friendship.

in the shade by "Ragabas," a bold caricature of Gambetta, where also Napoleon III. and Garibaldi appear under transparent veils. Here the Bonapartist, disappointed at the unexpected stability of the Third Republic, poured out the vials of his scornful hate on the new régime and the demagogues who typified to him the national decay. Again he returned to this Quixotic charge in "Les Bourgeois du pont d'Arcy," a rather mediocre domestic drama, in which politics form the redeeming feature. It was two months after the production of this play (1878) that Sardou took his seat among the dramatists of the Academy, and that sturdy democrat, Charles Blanc, who welcomed him, took him pleasantly to task for these incursions into "a world that was not his." But nothing daunted at this republican warning that the spirit of the empire was dead, at least for that generation, Sardou ventured, in 1880, to draw on his head the more rancorous rage of the clergy. His "Daniel Rochat" attacked what he regarded as the regrettable prejudice that still couples a religious ceremony with the civil marriage. But it is only charity to leave this play in the limbo into which it almost immediately fell.

And now, piqued by this check, and jealous of his popularity, Sardou hastened to efface the impression of "Rochat," and to place himself in accord with the prejudices and the frivolity of his auditors by the witty and not too scrupulous farce, "Divorçons," which in three hundred performances brought the Palais Royal theatre $300,000. The reform in the divorce laws of 1816, finally effected in 1884, was already vigorously urged in 1880, and Sardou handled it deftly so as to please his public by a sane conclusion and a healthy satire of the long line of dramas that,

since "Antony," had coquetted with adultery and half condoned it. "Divorçons" may be only a popgun beside the heavy artillery of Dumas and Augier; but it is much to make people laugh heartily in a good cause, to make the husband whose honor is threatened a subject of admiration not of pity, — in short, to make respectability more attractive than the primrose path.

Meantime Sardou had been developing from the social and political satire the drama of states or characters, in which he studies a single person, usually a woman, rather than a class or group. As early as 1866 he had attempted a study of feminine religious hypocrisy in a piece that he would have called "The Devotee." But the imperial censors, being disposed, like the Puritans of Hudibras, to "atone for sins they were inclined to by damning those they had no mind to," objected, and so the play appeared under the less distinctive name of its heroine Séraphine, a lady of fashion who is under such conviction of sin that she longs to have her daughter make vicarious satisfaction for it by entering a nunnery. A somewhat similar study of character is "Fernande," a rather trite story of the lily on the dunghill, Fernande in the gambling-house of her mother. The girl loves and marries a man who, through no fault of hers, is ignorant of the tainted environment of his bride. The situation is Diderot's, but the delightful ingenuousness with which Fernande regains the love of the now undeceived and outraged husband produced so telling an effect that Sardou sought to repeat it in "Dora," our English "Diplomacy," where also he played skilfully on the morbid dread of spies that has set all France quivering at intervals since the revelations of 1870. To this same class belong "Odette" and "Georgette," studies

of maternal love in otherwise frail women. These suggest the subjects of Dumas, but they are both accompanied by spectacular effects such as have come to be the peculiar mark of the latest phase of Sardou's versatile genius.

This tact and boldness in scenic sensation was revealed in all its glory in "Fédora," where the mysterious activity of the Russian Nihilists is drawn upon for a thrilling drama of crime. But "Fédora" is far more than a sensational spectacle, it is a drama of wonderful energy; effects crowd on one another in such quick succession that the spectator has no time to reflect on their probability as he sees the heroine caught in her own snares. To her the other characters are wholly subordinated, partly because this lies in the nature of the drama of states, partly because like the later plays it was written for Sarah Bernhardt, who naturally desired no rival, and so has done much to limit the expression of Sardou's genius.

These later plays are in the main historical and spectacular. He had attempted this style already with success in "Patrie," a drama of the Spanish Netherlands, dedicated to Mr. Motley, and regarded by an American critic as "the firmest and finest specimen of Sardou's skill." He repeated the venture in "La Haine," and obviously selected the subject of "Théodora" more for its scenic than for its dramatic qualities, though into the strange splendor of his Byzantine court the author has introduced a quick succession of emotional effects by the jealous violence of Justinian and the imperious will of her who had risen from the circus to the throne. Taken as a whole, however, this piece, even more than "Fédora," is addressed to the eye rather than to the ear, to the ear rather than

to the mind. There are probably but few scenes that would repay a reader's study, a sure sign that we have passed beyond the sphere of serious dramatic literature.

Since this is equally true of all the plays that have followed in the last decade, they may be briefly dismissed here, while in regard to certain travesties for the foreign market utter silence is golden.[1] Such work must be content to measure its success by commercial standards; and so measured these plays are almost unrivalled. Still in nearly every drama Sardou will give to one or two scenes a literary elaboration that does not let us forget his power. Such will occur to every spectator of "La Tosca," a curious attempt to combine the interest of "Fédora" with that of "Marion de Lorme;" they recur in "Thermidor," a political spectacle of the Reign of Terror, where Sardou shows himself still faithful to the position of "Ragabas;" they can be found in "Madame Sans-Gêne," which is otherwise little more than an adaptation of the earlier work of Moreau to the revival of interest in the Napoleonic legend, and they are said to characterize also his later play, "Gismonda," where Constantinople under the brief rule of the Latin emperors offers a picturesque contrast between the mediæval West and the still Greek Byzantium. Here the wily Sardou dazzles the auditors with the most gorgeous spectacle ever attempted in France, while he tickles democratic ears that were offended by "Thermidor" with the triumph of a parvenu, the denunciation of

[1] The curious may examine "Oncle Sam," whose only interest lies in the monumental silliness of its ignorance; "Andrea," originally produced in New York as "Agnes;" or "Le Crocodile," that in spite of some political spice is hardly up to the level of a Drury-Lane pantomime.

papal intrigue, and a little fillip of irreligion in a few well-placed speeches.

One will hardly sum up better the total impression of Sardou's versatile genius than to call him with Lanson "an eminent vaudevillist." Like Scribe he imported into the serious drama only the taste for sensational and spectacular effects that tends to corrupt the stage and to make it artificial and insincere. Like Scribe he is an artist for art, a handicraftsman with no higher purpose than to fill the theatre and his pockets. With his finger on the public pulse he has an instinct to divine the popular heart, to seem all things to all men, to praise Haussmann in "Les Ganaches," and to damn him in "Maison neuve," to turn every popular enthusiasm and prejudice to private account, to live in the belief that "the voice of the people is the voice of God." In the evolution of the drama he is the natural product of literary democracy. His frequent borrowings[1] might be forgiven him, but he will not live because his genius, like Scribe's, is insincere.

The great strength of his work, apart from its stage setting, is its lively dialogue, that in spite of its brilliancy never ceases to appear natural, and after this his skill in dramatic suspense. These he is apt to employ alternately, for he does not waste his powder. He will make his hearers laugh for two acts, and then bring up the fresh reserve force of his intrigue to hold them breathless for the last three. He is more free in the use of slang even than Dumas, and does not scorn to enliven his Parisian dialogue with puns and parodied quotations, chiefly from Hugo. Of course his dramas have a happy ending, except where

[1] For instances see Matthews, l. c. p. 186.

the public demand an artistic death-scene from the genial Bernhardt, when he is ready to make a facile concession to the box-office. And for the same reason we may be sure that Sardou will always be on the safe side in morals, on the side of the family and the philistine bourgeois. He is especially gallant to the ladies. "In my pieces," he says, "they always have the best part, — that of goodness, tenderness, and devotion." If he has not the conviction of Augier, he has not the skepticism of Dumas. Instinct and interest have combined to make him the most frankly commercial of modern playwrights, a clever salesman of his wit, the true successor of Scribe, "with double portion of his father's art."

Augier, Dumas, and Sardou are by universal consent the great lights of the modern French drama; nor have any of their fellows contributed essentially to the evolution of the art, save the Naturalistic iconoclasts whose excursions into the theatrical domain have had more negative than positive results. But before we speak of these, there are several men who have contributed so much to preserve the supremacy of the French stage in Europe that they should not be passed unnoticed here. Of these the most interesting is Labiche whose dramatic career presents an interest that is quite unique. Popular almost from the first, his higher qualities were not appreciated by the critics till he had withdrawn from active literary life to the dignified leisure so dear to the French heart; and it was from his country-house in Normandy that he was called to take his seat in the French Academy, the highest honor that France has to bestow on her men of intellect.

Labiche was born on May 5, 1815, in the midst of the Hundred Days of Napoleon's desperate attempt to

regain his throne. Like his friend Augier and several other of his dramatic associates, he studied for the bar; but this proved distasteful to him, and at twenty he began his literary career with stories in the newspapers, which he followed up, three years later, with a novel and his first drama, "M. de Coyllin," written with the double collaboration of Michel and Lefranc. Though this play had very small success, the stage fascinated him, and for nearly forty years (1838–1876) he continued to pour out a succession of farces and comedies, of which only the best are gathered in the ten volumes of his so-called "Théâtre complet."

In 1876, anticipating the waning of his popularity, he retired to Normandy, wealthy, but with no prospect of enduring fame. He seemed to leave no gap behind in the dramatic world. Fortunately, however, he carried with him the friendship of Augier, who, while visiting him some months after, fell to reading on an idle day some of his friend's comedies, and found as much to admire in them as in their author. Charmed with his discovery, he persuaded Labiche to publish a collected edition of his plays, for which he furnished a warm preface. Others — among them Sarcey, the dramatic autocrat of Paris — chimed in the chorus of praise, and in 1879 no one found it presumptuous that he whose departure had not left a ripple on the surface of literary Paris should return as a candidate for the Academy, which in these latter days has been peculiarly cordial to playwrights, as though wishing to make honorable amends for the exclusion of Beaumarchais and Molière.[1] Labiche was made an Acade-

[1] His dramatic colleagues in the Academy of 1880 were Hugo, Augier, Dumas *fils*, Feuillet, Sandeau, Sardou, making, with Labiche, more than a sixth of the Forty Immortals.

mician in 1880; but he could not be tempted to resume literary work, and died January 23, 1888.

All the best qualities of Labiche's work [1] are contained in his "Voyage de M. Perrichon." While he is always witty, he seldom holds up so true or so polished a mirror to the foibles of human nature as in this comedy, though the very exuberance of his humor sometimes hides its truth, as it does that of Beaumarchais. M. Lemoine said, in welcoming Labiche to the Academy, that, however light or venturesome some of his plays might be, they were never immoral because they were never sentimental. But "Perrichon" can be accepted with even less reserve than the majority of his collected works. Here the humor is rather that of situation and of character than of what Butler calls "cat and puss" dialogue, the classic *stichomachia*, or that riotous fancy that, as Mr. Matthews puts it, "grins through a horse-collar." Behind the mask of caricature, the attentive reader will not fail to see, with Augier, delicacy of tone, accuracy of expression, and an unflagging vivacity. "Seek," the same writer continues, "among the highest works of our generation for a comedy of more profound observation than 'Perrichon.' . . . And Labiche has ten plays of this strength in his repertory." The number is, perhaps, a little too great; but while his farces and extravaganzas won

[1] For critical appreciation of Labiche's comedies, see Augier's preface to the Théâtre complet; Nouvelle Revue, Oct. 1, 1880; Dumas, Entr'actes, iii. 336; and, best of all, Matthews, French Dramatists, 224 sqq., who has traced the well-known English farces, "Box and Cox," "Little Toddlekins," and "The Phenomenon in a Smock Frock," to Labiche, and has found "Papa Perrichon" in the repertory of the Boston Museum. See also the introduction to the author's edition of "Perrichon" (Boston: Heath) for a fuller criticism of that play, together with much that is said above.

their meed of ephemeral praise, in "Perrichon" and four or five other plays, Labiche rose to pure comedy, and set up in the domain of literature a work whose social philosophy gives it enduring life, and makes him, as Dumas says, "one of the finest and frankest of comic poets since Plautus, and perhaps the only one to be compared with him."[1]

In this lighter vein of comedy Meilhac and Halévy[2] achieved great distinction during the Second Empire, an eminence that they have seemed in later days willing to exchange for a humbler place in the legitimate drama. To the generation that is passing away they were known "from China to Peru" as the composers of Offenbach's most popular librettos, and admired equally at home as the authors of farces of more than usual levity. Their first great success was "La Belle Hélène," which caught admirably the mocking *blague* of Crémieux' "Orphée aux enfers," a strain continued in "Barbe-bleue," "La Grande duchesse" and "Carmen." It was not till toward the close of the Empire that they essayed the serious drama in "Frou-Frou" (1869), one of the greatest theatrical successes of the century and wholly different from the farcical work that had preceded it. The earlier portions suggest

[1] To this higher range of comedy belong "Célimare le Bien-Aimé," "Le Plus heureux des trois," "Cagnotte," and "Moi," of which the two latter may be commended for general reading. Among the best of the farces are "Poudre aux yeux" and "La Grammaire," both, with "Perrichon," in the second volume of the "Théâtre complet."

[2] Meilhac (b. 1831, d. 1888) began writing for the stage in 1855, and was closely associated with Halévy from 1861 to 1881. His best independent pieces are "La Vertu de Célimène," 1861, and "Décoré," 1888.

Halévy (b. 1834) has since 1881 turned to novelistic and satiric sketches, e. g., L'Abbé Constantin, 1882; La Famille Cardinal, 1883; Criquette, 1883. Both were members of the Academy. Matthews, l.c., has a chapter on their joint dramatic work.

the seriousness of Augier as they lay bare the results to moral character of the restless grasping for pleasure that marked the social life of the declining Empire, and show how it corrodes heart and conscience. Toward the close the sternness of satire yields to melodramatic emotion and an elegiac note predominates in the final scene, where the poor crushed butterfly Frou-Frou, racked by consumption, returns to her husband, embraces her child, and dies on the stage, a concession, like those of Sardou, to the demands of the great actress Bernhardt. Other ventures of these *dioscuri* of realistic or farcical satire are "Fanny Lear," "Tricoche et Cacolet," and "La Boule;" but these reflect rather the violent sensational method of "La Dame aux camélias" than the individuality of Meilhac and Halévy, that best shows its sparkling effervescence and genuine dramatic force in such little one-act plays as "Reveillon" or the unsavory but clever "Toto chez Tata."

In more recent years a novel turn has been given to social satire by Pailleron's "Monde où l'on s'ennuie" (1881), one of the best comedies of the last twenty years and one of the historical successes of the Théâtre Français, though it is the only important work of its author.[1] "The World of Boredom" is that of Molière's "Femmes savantes" as they appear in our day, with their affectation of learning, their scholarly and æsthetic pretensions, masking an active intrigue for government promotions and official distinctions. It added to the vogue of the play that the characters were more photographic than

[1] Pailleron (b. 1834) has published several volumes of poetry and dramatic trifles. "Les Cabotins," his more recent play (1894), is of a higher order, and a single scene of "Le Monde où l'on s'amuse (1868) is often cited as a masterpiece of stage-craft in the management of numbers on the stage.

typical. The triteness of the plot was readily forgiven for the satiric *verve* of the dialogue and the piquant delicacy of delineations that all Paris recognized in spite of the faint denials of the author.

Thus far we have spoken of men who were pre-eminently dramatists. A word must be said of those who have achieved greater distinction in other fields, and, finally, of the effort to apply to the stage the pseudo-Naturalistic theory of the "human document," or, as these would-be dramatists say, to present "slices of life." Among the novelists George Sand, Ohnet, and Daudet have essayed the legitimate drama, as have the poets Banville, Coppée, and the critic Lemaître, of whose work it is more convenient to speak elsewhere.[1] There is one novelist, however, Octave Feuillet, whose best dramatic work synchronizing with that of Augier has a peculiar individuality. Feuillet began life as a collaborator of the elder Dumas, but he presently deserted the Romantic banner, and set up his own establishment as the "Family Musset," the purveyor of novels and plays that should make the concession to prejudice rather than morals of avoiding those extra-marital relations so common in the work of Dumas *fils*, Augier, and Sardou. Beneath this varnish of morality, however, we have a maximum of ethical perversion; for, as Shakspere knew, "Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds." Indeed his plays are so fundamentally unhealthy, such hot-house growths, that one feels that Feuillet survived himself when he survived the Empire and the patronage of Eugénie.[2]

[1] See chapters xi., xii., xiii., and ix.

[2] I name only Cheveu blanc, 1856; Le Roman d'un jeune homme pauvre (dramatized 1858); La Tentation, La Belle au bois dormant, Montjoie, all before 1863. For a more favorable view of Feuillet's ethics, see Loti's *Discours* at his reception into the French Academy, *and Doumic*, op. cit.

In all the work that has been noticed thus far the conventions of the stage as Scribe and the Romanticists had left it had been observed; but with the rise of dogmatic Naturalism a determined effort was made to conquer the drama for the theories that had been so rapidly propagated in the field of fiction. "The theatre will be Naturalistic or it will cease to be," said the ever positive Zola, to whom the conservatism of the stage had long been a thorn in the flesh. Like the Romanticists of 1830, he and his fellows felt that the battle must be won on this field. The result of the struggle is instructive, for experience has corroborated theory in fixing the demarcation of the drama and fiction.

Zola's "Naturalisme au théâtre" was to be the new school's "Preface to Cromwell," and his "Renée" was to be the naturalistic "Hernani."[1] The former did not convince, and the latter was emphatically rejected both by the critics and the public. In the next year he returned to the charge in "Germinal," only to find those as dissatisfied and these more impatient. His piece was pronounced, with an allusion to his own vocabulary, to be both *crevante* and *assommante*. And yet the same critics and the same public would have agreed that the novels from which these plays were taken[2] were all good and one of them a masterpiece; and that the fundamental situation of the former was essentially dramatic is attested by the success of Racine's "Phèdre." Where, then, lies the secret of their failure, if not in this, that Naturalism is opposed

[1] "Renée" dates from 1887. Zola had already produced the strong but gloomy dramatized novel "Thérèse Raquin," 1873, and Busnach had successfully dramatized "L'Assommoir" in 1879.

[2] The novelistic sources are, for "Renée," "Nantas" and "La Curée;" for "Germinal," the novel of like name.

to dramatic development, which then will appear to be different in its requirements from prose fiction? By sacrificing in their mistaken zeal for realistic effect the conventions essential to the dramatic *genre*, they stretched a snare in their own path. But they failed to notice an even more fundamental distinction. The modern pseudo-scientific novel is essentially necessitarian, it regards men as the products of birth and environment, while it is a fundamental condition of the drama to show will in action.[1] Hence the skilful playwright who dramatizes "Nana" or "L'Assommoir" subjects them to fundamental changes, without which no Naturalistic novel has ever succeeded on the stage.[2]

It is natural, however, that the artificiality of Scribe, of which the dramatists that have occupied us in this chapter retained perhaps too much, should have provoked a reaction toward greater realism in dramatic construction. A moderate representative of these reforming tendencies is Becque, a realist with remarkable keenness of observation and irony.[3] More radical than he is Hennique, once the peculiar star of the Théâtre Libre, which proposed to give the freest scope to dramatic experiment and reform. The tendency of his work is to break up the connected drama into a series of isolated scenes,[4] and so to increase the illusion of the spectator, who in real life is obliged to imagine the connection between the disjointed parts of any prolonged action that would come to an individual's

[1] See Brunetière, Littérature contemporaine, p. 241 sqq.

[2] The most noteworthy failures have been the dramatizations of the Goncourts' "Renée Mauperin," "Germinie Lacertaux," and "La Fille Eliza," all backed by a most enthusiastic cabal.

[3] Born 1837. Characteristic dramas are "Le Corbeau" and "La Parisienne."

[4] E. g., in La Mort du duc d'Enghien, 1888.

notice. That such a radical change in dramatic methods will or should succeed is hardly to be expected or perhaps desired, and the interest that was at first manifested even in the wild vagaries of the Théâtre Libre seems to be waning. But this is only one of the signs that the old dramatic forms are felt to be outworn, that men feel the need of new bottles for their new wine. The only play of Maupassant [1] fell naturally into the new lines, and the distinguished dramatic critic Lemaître has himself somewhat overstepped the bounds of the conventional drama.[2] But whether this marks the fruitful beginning of a new era or the sterile flowering of an old one, it is as yet impossible to determine.

[1] Musette, 1891.

[2] Révoltée, 1889; Député Leveau, 1891; Les Rois, 1893; Le Pardon, 1895.

CHAPTER XI.

MODERN FICTION. — I. THE EVOLUTION OF NATURALISM.

THE Romantic School won its first triumphs in lyric poetry, and enjoyed here its most lasting pre-eminence. From 1830 to 1843 it ruled the stage. But even during this period of its most unquestioned sway it could not obtain an unchallenged place in prose fiction. In this department it first became felt that in enfranchising literature the Romanticists had loosed too much the tie that bound it to reality. What had been won for individualism by De Vigny, Dumas, and Hugo was an inalienable possession; but several more or less independent novelists existed beside these, who were unconsciously paving the way for the naturalistic and psychological schools of the last thirty years. The analytic novelists of whom Bourget is a familiar type may find their origins in Constant's "Adolphe," and even more directly in the work of Stendhal and in the lyric egoism of George Sand's early romances;[1] while Balzac and Mérimée, though neither of them without a flavor of Romanticism, first accentuate a movement that culminates with Maupassant and Zola.

What separates these writers from the Romantic movement is in no sense a reactionary protest, a return to the methods of the eighteenth century. For just as Romanticism was the concomitant if not the

[1] See Brunetière, Évolution de la poésie lyrique, p. 293 sqq., which however the author had not read when this was written.

result in literature of the aspiration and effort for civil liberty that led to the Revolution of 1830, so this movement toward realism has followed the development of the scientific spirit in popular instruction, and for that reason it sought its first expression in the novel, the most popular of literary *genres*, though it has spread thence like leaven through all forms of thought, and has exercised an influence as deep and more lasting than Romanticism itself.

Among these novelists the one who shows greatest affiliation with the Romantic spirit is George Sand, and with her, therefore, it is best to begin any effort to trace the evolution of French Naturalistic fiction, though she is the youngest of the forerunners of that school and survived its prime. It would perhaps be hard to find, at least in the higher reaches of authorship, one in whose veins flowed more varied blood than was blended in Amantine-Aurore Dupin,[1] who as the divorced wife of M. Dudevant is the George

[1] Born 1804; died 1876. Of the 107 volumes of her works 84 contain prose fiction, 10 correspondence, 8 memoirs, and 5 drama. The chronology of her most typical novels is: First period — Indiana, 1832; Valentine, 1832; Lélia, 1833; Jacques, 1834; André, 1835; Leone Leoni, 1835; Mauprat, 1836. Second period — Spiridion, 1838; Compagnon du tour de France, 1840; Horace, 1842; Consuelo, 1842; Comtesse de Rudolstadt, 1843; Meunier d'Angibault, 1845; Péché de M. Antoine, 1847. Third period (anticipated by Jeanne, 1844, and Mare au diable, 1846) — Teverino, 1848; Piccinino, 1848; La Petite Fadette, 1848, François le champi, 1850; Filleule, 1851; Mont Revêche, 1851; Les Maîtres sonneurs, 1852; Beaux messieurs du bois doré, 1858; Mlle. de la Quintinie, 1863; Confession d'une jeune fille, 1865; Mlle. de Merquem, 1870.

Criticism: Caro, George Sand (Grands écrivains français); Faguet, xix. siècle, p. 383; Brunetière, Poésie lyrique, i. 295 sqq.; France, Vie littéraire, i. 339; Lemaître, Contemporains, iv. 159; Pellissier, Mouvement littéraire, p. 237; Lanson, Littérature française, p. 973; Taine, Nouvelles essais, p. 127; Devaux, George Sand.

Sand of literary history. For while on her mother's side her ancestry is soon lost in plebeian depths, her father was a direct descendant of Augustus II. of Poland through the Count de Saxe, who left behind him a youth as redolent of gallant adventure as was the literary apprenticeship of his granddaughter. To her mother she doubtless owed her taste for the stage, and infant impressions of her maternal grandfather's bird-shop have lent their naïveté to some charming scenes in "Teverino;" but the prevailing impressions of her childhood were formed at Nohant, the estate of her father's mother, on the lovely river Indre in Berry, one of the most Arcadian regions in central France, whither she went at seven to draw from it the purest inspirations of her literary life.

For here, while the democratic sympathies of her mother were maintained by frequent visits, they were softened by a daily contact with the old aristocracy, so that she realized more than any of the contemporary novelists what had been the true life of the *ancien régime*, as she showed, for instance, in "Le Marquis de Villemer." But her most fruitful lessons were not those of the *château*, but rather the unconscious education of Nature as she walked by the Indre or chased butterflies in the Dark Valley, with "Atala," "Paul and Virginia," or "Corinne" for a companion, or perhaps the tales of Rousseau, with the education of whose "Émile" her own forms an instructive parallel.

But when she was fourteen the wave of religious and conservative reaction that was passing over France persuaded Madame Dupin that it was time to conform the education of her charge to the prejudices of prospective husbands; and so the young girl, proficient in shooting, fencing, dancing, but such a child of

nature that she had not even learned to make the sign of the cross, was sent to the "Dames Anglaises," a fashionable conventual school in Paris, where her country manners immediately won her the nickname of "little boy." The rich food that her ardent imagination found in the splendors of Roman ritual and in the peaceful solemnity of the cloister has its witness in "Spiridion." She became for a time most ardent in her devotions, exceeding not only the rules of the school, but even the dictates of prudence, so that her superiors were constrained to check her fervor. But in 1820 she was recalled from this hotbed of artificial emotions to her dying grandmother, and two years later the solitary and unprotected girl was overpersuaded by her relatives to marry François Dudevant, a country squire no better and no worse than most of his prosaic fellows, caring more to extend his fields than his mind, more for good breeds of cattle than for good breeding. Now, of all men this philistine realist was the least suited to be the helpmate of an enthusiastic, emotional, and rather independent girl. That he might employ her dowry of half a million francs to their common advantage, he thought it no robbery to neglect her heart. Many have borne a similar fate with philosophy and the consolations of their children, but her health broke down at length under the strain, and she returned to Nohant from a journey to the Pyrenees with the experience of having roused and resisted for the first time an ardent passion.

This new vision of love filled her imagination. In vain she sought repose in art, in science, in literature. Desperate at last in 1828 she suddenly abandoned her husband and Nohant, and, after a brief interval

of rest with the Dames Anglaises, supported herself for a time by coloring prints, leading the precarious Bohemian life of the students of the Latin Quarter. Here the Revolution of July found her modest attic shared by Jules Sandeau,[1] with whom she wrote, under the pseudonym Jules Sand, the novel "Rose et Blanche," a work of such promise that she readily found a publisher for "Indiana;" and as this was hers alone, she signed it George Sand.

Thus launched on a literary career, she wrote more than thirty volumes in ten years, all in the main under the direct inspiration of Rousseau, Chateaubriand, and her own experience of married life; for these novels of her first manner are busied almost wholly with the "unholy trinity" of husband, lover, and *femme incomprise*. But there is development in them. At first the men are all unsympathetic. Then in "Valentine" the husband becomes at least polished, the lover noble, generous, attractive, while the woman remains still Madame Dudevant. Here, too, we find the first traces of that power of picturesque description of nature that did not reach its full development till toward the close of her second period. Then, in her third novel, "Jacques," she is ready to preach the gospel of free love, convinced that the restraints of marriage are unfavorable to the conservation of passion, and admiring the magnanimity of a husband who will make way for a lover by suicide. Wild as this tale is, it was the herald of a long train of similar novels both in France and Germany, and is as important for the evolution of fiction as "Antony" for that of the drama.

The climax of this period however is marked by the

[1] See p. 359, note.

gloomy, restless despair of "Lélia," whose wild unreasoning eloquence shows that for the time its author had lost faith not only in marriage but in love itself and even in life. Yet the book seems to have freed her bosom of the perilous stuff that preyed upon her heart, and from this time she grew more reconciled to the world. "Leone Leoni" may place passion above reason, but it marks her first serious attempt at psychological analysis; and when, in 1836, a legal separation from her husband restored to some extent her fortune, travel and new experiences were reflected in stories with a wider range of interest. "Mauprat" shows growing power in the delineation of character, while "André" touches the pastoral vein from which she afterward drew the richest treasures of her genius.

Her free Bohemian life had brought her in contact with many men of genius. Sandeau yielded his place to Alfred de Musset, with whom she made a journey to Italy, of which each has left a tale of woe.[1] Then the socialistic lawyer Michel (de Bourges) claimed her enthusiasm, to be followed by the composer Chopin, whose mark may be found on "Consuelo." But in 1839 she grew weary of this nomad life and a little doubtful of her philosophy of individualistic egoism. She returned to Nohant, and presently developed into a somewhat prosaic chatelaine. Meantime, however, her mobile mind had been drawn into Christian Socialistic channels by the enthusiastic Lamennais, as well as by miscellaneous and ill-digested reading of the philosophers of the eighteenth century. In 1837 the resigned optimism of the "Letters to Marcia"

[1] He in "Un Merle blanc," she in "Elle et lui," to which the poet's brother Paul replied in "Lui et elle."

seemed to mark a radical change from the position of "Lélia" four years before. But in the very next year "Spiridion" showed that she had not yet come to clearness, for here she recants her recantation, and seeks the solution of the evils of society, not in religion but in politics. Now, this involved the abandonment of the Romantic position, and so inaugurates a second period, extending to the Revolution of 1848, during which her books are tinged with a generous but ill-defined and illogical socialism. This found its extreme expression in the "Meunier d'Angibault," where there is a complete fusion of class distinctions; but the most popular novel of the group is "Consuelo," the fruit of her long attachment to Chopin, though here the political and social speculations are intruded rather than essential.

One may pass briefly over these years in which George Sand was little more than the echo, sometimes the distorted echo, of such nebulous thinkers as Jean Reynaud, Barbès, and Pierre Leroux. Her socialism led her, however, to take many of her characters from the artisan and peasant classes, that, till then, had been hardly more than parodied in fiction; but she combined poetic fancy with minute observation, and so produced "Jeanne" and "La Mare au diable," naturalistic idyls that mark an important step in the divorce of fiction from the lyric spirit of Romanticism, while at the same time they widened the sphere of the novel for the ultra Romanticists of socialism, Sue and Hugo. But this phase of her productivity was interrupted by the Revolution, which recalled her for a time to politics and to journalism under the auspices of Ledru-Rollin. Yet the experiences of May and June cooled the enthusiasms of February. They re-

stored her to literature, where she was now to develop her third, the pastoral, manner.

Her studies of the peasantry of Berry are probably George Sand's most permanent contribution to literature. They show a feeling for nature, exquisite and till then unparalleled in French fiction. Delicate in style, admirable in composition, deeply poetic, yet simply realistic, "La Mare au diable," "François le champi," "La Petite Fadette," and most original of all, "Les Maîtres sonneurs," have the perpetual charm that belongs to every union of truth and beauty. Still, this vein, however rich, could not be worked indefinitely. The pastoral gradually gave place to dramatic attempts, one of which, "Le Marquis de Villemer," in which she had the collaboration of Dumas *fils*, had much success. Meantime, however, from the pastoral and the drama she was developing her fourth manner, where, with mind and taste clarified by age, she retains the idyllic tone and the country scene, but adds to the delicate delineation of character a fuller intrigue, richer life, and greater variety of situation.[1] Her pen was tireless, and till she was past seventy she continued to do her daily task. The principal interest of the last decade, however, centres in her "Journal" during the German war, and in her letters, especially those to Flaubert, for these throw most interesting light on her critical ideas and literary methods.

Her view of the novelist's art made it essentially the expression of lyric passion. "Nothing is strong in

[1] Typical of the period are "Mlle. Merquem," "Mlle. de la Quintinie," "Le Marquis de Villemer," and "Jean de la Roche," the scenes of which are laid respectively in Normandy, Savoy, the Velay, and Auvergne. Characteristic also are "Légendes rustiques" and "Marianne."

me," she said, "but the necessity of love;" and when this is in question, she will be thoroughly Romantic, however realistic she may be elsewhere. Her passion varies, however. It is at first personal, then social and humanitarian. Her central impulse is always an emotion, not an idea, and this is reflected in the composition of her novels, where she is apt to conceive her situation and "let her pen trot" with no clearly defined goal. So the beginning of each story is apt to be the best, and the body of the work better than its close, which occurs, not from any structural necessity, but only because the subject has written itself out in her mind, from which, indeed, she was wont to let it pass so completely that if she chanced to read her own novels after an interval, she found she could not recall so much as the names of the characters.

This composition at hap-hazard, finishing one novel and beginning another on the same evening, was sustained by a fertile imagination that loved to cradle itself in a rosy optimism. She delighted in "superior beings," in whose magnanimity, gentleness, and passionate devotion the glowing sympathies of her heart alone found satisfaction. Hence her heroes and heroines become less real, and so attract us less than the more genuine creatures of earth that surround them. And here, curiously enough, her strength is just where Balzac, her greatest contemporary, is weakest, — in the aristocracy and in her young girls. "You write the 'Comédie humaine,'" she says to him; "I should like to write the épopée, the eclogue of humanity." For such real flesh and blood girls as hers, we must go back to Marivaux if not to Molière. "Not the child nor the young wife, but the budding woman, naïve, gentle, timid, with her ingenuous coquetries, her comic

little vexations, her timorous ventures, her invincibly romantic disposition, and her constant bashfulness at showing it, her long, silent hopes, and discreet waiting, the tempestuous heart and the calm face; all that little world so thrilling, so concentrated, so manifold. All fail here, and George Sand, too, sometimes, but not always." [1]

She thought herself "extremely feminine in the inconsequence of her ideas and absolute lack of logic." But she was sensible, though not profound. The Romantic girls who took her heroines literally got no comfort from her. "Lélia is not I," she writes to one of them; "I am a better woman than that. It is only a poem, not a doctrine." She could not have spoken more truly. She is pre-eminently the poet among the novelists of the century. Standing between the Romantic novel of adventure and the realistic study of manners, between Dumas and Balzac, she renews the idyl, wins back the lyric from its extreme individualism, unites poetry to reality, and, if she left few descendants in France to walk in her *via media*, the seeds she scattered found fruitful soil in England, and especially in Russia, whence in these last days they have found an acceptance in France that augurs an approaching revival of her own popularity.

More connected with the beginnings of Romanticism than George Sand, yet more sharply differentiated from it, both in his literary methods and in his aims, is Henri Beyle, or Stendhal, as he preferred to call himself. He can hardly be ranked among great novelists, unless the keenest analysis of character alone give that rank; he was never popular, and probably never will be. Yet his influence is not to be measured

[1] Faguet, xix. siècle, p. 403.

by the number of his readers, for, like the Goncourt Brothers, he has been read, admired, and studied by those more popular writers who gave to the fiction of the second Empire its character, while through them and by his own work, his influence has been continued to our own day.

Beyle's[1] childhood was irritated by misdirected piety or its pretence, and so he became in youth a disciple of the Materialists; but at seventeen the Napoleonic campaigns drew him into the active army, where he learned a passionate love of Bonaparte that he was to display boldly in after days when such sentiments were neither popular nor prudent. He served the Emperor in Italy and Germany, and followed him to Russia; but ill health had constrained him to leave the army before Napoleon's first abdication, and he watched with philosophic calm the strange course of the Hundred Days. Milan had long been his favorite city, and here he lived till he was expelled by the Austrian police in 1821. He remained in Italy, however, except for a few brief visits to Paris, until his death.

This expatriation only symbolized the moral and literary isolation of his mind. His boyhood had given him more sympathy with the age of Voltaire than with that of Chateaubriand, while his inveterate habit

[1] Born 1783; died 1842. Collected works in nineteen volumes, with five more of posthumous letters and journals. Principal novels: Armance, 1827; Le Rouge et le noir, 1831; La Chartreuse de Parme, 1839.

Criticism: Taine. Essais de critique et d'histoire; Bourget, Psychologie contemporaine; Zola, Romanciers naturalistes; Lemaître, Contemporains, iv. 3; Rod, Stendhal (Grands écrivains français); Cordier, Stendhal raconté par ses amis; Mérimée, Portraits historiques; Sainte-Beuve, Causeries du lundi, ix. 301–341; Faguet in "Revue des deux mondes," February, 1892. Lanson cites also "Revue blanche," March, 1894.

of anxious introspection marks a greater affinity with the modern Psychologists and Symbolists than with his Romantic contemporaries. So he is claimed as an ancestor by men so far apart in the world of letters as Taine, Zola, and Bourget, for he shares with them all the spirit of relentless analysis. This is a veritable instinct with him. The most minute self-examinations fill his Journal. He confesses his aims with a frankness that is often startling, and notes, cynically sometimes, what he should have done or left undone to attain them. He was, as he is constantly telling himself, "different" from his environment, born either too early or too late. His contemporaries did not understand him. Hardly one of his books could have paid the expenses of publication, and it is said that his curious essay on "Love," the fruit of persistent experiment and analysis, attained the phenomenal sale of seventeen copies in eleven years. But now cheap and popular as well as luxurious and costly editions are published of works that never paid the type-setter, and he whom Nisard, the chief literary historian of the early part of the century, did not so much as name, has the sweepings of his study edited without sifting, attracts the critical study of the best minds of France, and finds his natural place among "Les Grands écrivains français."

His literary work began with a volume of Italian travel and another on Painting in Italy (1817). Five years later came the striking essay on "Love" and "Racine and Shakspere," a welcome aid to the advance guard of Romanticism. Again five years and his first novel, "Armance," is offered to an indifferent public. Four years later appeared "Le Rouge et le noir," a study of the results of the Restoration on the youth of

France, thought by the Naturalists to be his masterpiece, probably because those not of that coterie have preferred "La Chartreuse de Parme" (1839). He left also an unfinished novel of which the fragment gives promise that it might have been his best.

The long intervals that separate these works justify Zola's remark that to judge Stendhal from himself his work was the accident of his existence. He was always posing as a literary dilettante, not as an author. He was not a close student, and he had not a philosophic mind, but he used with skill the information that came in his way, and he had a happy faculty of making the shallow seem deep. There was in him a little of the dandy, a good deal of the soldier, and he would have been glad if there had been more of the Don Juan. In religion he continued always a thoroughgoing disciple of Helvétius and Condillac; that is, he was an optimistic atheist of a genus now happily extinct. As a critic, his blunders were cyclopean, surpassed only by his monumental self-complacency. He tells us in his Journal that he is resolved to get the reputation of the greatest poet of France, "not by intrigue like Voltaire, but by deserving it. Therefore," continues the youth of twenty, "I must learn Greek, and not form my taste on the model of my predecessors." A little later he is pleased to record "my proud bearing," "my charming grace," and "the reflection *à la* Molière that I made at that moment." He admires "the inimitable physiognomy of my conversation." Surely facile fatuousness never went further; and yet this man had keener powers of psychic analysis than any other writer of his generation. But this appears chiefly in his novels, to whose character and influence we may now fitly confine our attention.

Yet even in his fiction the reader must be warned to expect little from a writer who says that he "reads the Code every morning to catch the tone," and catches it so faithfully as to make his work from this point of view "detestable" in the eyes of Sainte-Beuve. His sole interest is in the analysis of the states of soul of himself, of his friends, of the creations of his fancy; and he makes it because he is convinced that if he will but study them closely enough he can spy out the secret of happiness. Hence his eagerness has little of the objectivity of the modern school. He is always present in his work, commenting on his characters, as Thackeray loved to do and as Zola or Bourget would not. And he is differentiated from the moderns in another important matter. In his analysis of thoughts and sentiments he neglected, as the psychology of his time did also, the influence of external conditions, and so he leaves half unfulfilled his declared purpose "to make his novels a mirror which as you carry it along the street lets all sorts of images be reflected in it as chance directs." But curiously or perversely, it is precisely this lack of definite environment that he criticises in French classical tragedy, of which he thinks it one of the chief faults "to forget that there is no sensibility (that is, no power of arousing sympathetic emotion) without details."

In all his novels the one subject of analysis is the various forms of restlessness into which the fall of Napoleon had thrown a generation brought up to action and quick decision, trained to seek and to expect a life filled with violent emotions and vaulting ambitions, and cast now, their occupation gone, on the piping times of the Restoration. How shall this pent up energy and passion find a vent? is the question that

all his heroes are set to answer, from "Armance" to the posthumous "Lamiel." Stendhal had a sort of worship of energy and passion. It is this that makes the Italy of the sixteenth century particularly dear to him. He thought it high praise to call Napoleon a descendant of the *condottieri*. It was for their uncontrollable passion that Italian women found especial favor in his eyes. He felt more at home in Milan than in Paris, and composed for himself the Italian epitaph: "Here lies Henri Beyle, Milanese. He lived, wrote, and loved."

In a very discriminating essay the pontiff of Naturalism has called Stendhal[1] "the father of us all." An examination of his novels will show how far and how he merits the title. When "Armance" describes itself as "some scenes from a Parisian salon in 1827," it promises a realistic study of social types, but the book brings us immediately and exclusively into the company of those exceptional beings that alone attract Stendhal, just as they did Taine, because in them all psychological processes appear magnified. Throughout his hero and heroine seem afraid of becoming the dupes each of the other, just as Stendhal himself spent his life in self-tormenting dread of being the victim of his friends and of the conventions of society. The interest in these people who morbidly shrink from their mutual love lies solely in the minute photography of their changing thoughts and feelings. The curiosity that they awaken in the reader is, as Zola says, like that of a child who holds a watch to his ear to hear it tick. But while as a novel the book is undeniably hard reading, the analysis of motive was executed with an acuteness wholly new in fiction.

[1] Zola, Romanciers naturalistes, p. 124.

Of far more significance in the evolution of fiction is "Le Rouge et le noir," whose protagonist Julien Sorel is a great and typical creation. His career, though founded in fact,[1] is a veritable breviary of hypocrisy that throws no little light on dark corners of Stendhal's own character. The energies that would have won Julien promotion and glory in the army of Napoleon may not "fust in him unused," but find in the church the only avenue of rapid promotion and social distinction. In his wider purpose to make his book a "chronicle of the nineteenth century," a realistic study of Parisian society, Stendhal failed because he had neither the knowledge nor the sympathy of Balzac. But in intent "Le Rouge et le noir" is a forerunner of the "Comédie humaine;" and if he did not give a true picture of society, he did render with the keenest analysis a state of mind common to the French youth of the Restoration, and in Julien he showed the world what he himself wished to be thought to be and in some measure was, "the strangest mixture conceivable of originality, natural and acquired, of sincerity and pose, of clairvoyance and illusion, of dissimulation and recklessness." The very wrecking of the hypocrite's life at the close through the unconquerable impulse of passion is only an illustration of Stendhal's view that passion is, and ought to be, the supreme arbiter of destiny. Julien's execution is his apotheosis.

Though skilful in the dissection of motives, "Le Rouge et le noir" is careless in style and slovenly in construction. The action is constantly suspended or delayed, while the author belabors the brains of his characters, till the reader is in danger of a sympathetic headache.

[1] It is based on facts brought out at the trial of a theological student, Berthelet of Besançon.

The modern psychological school, Bourget and his fellows, may find their method anticipated in the account of Julien's seminary life, and of his reflections in the condemned cell, which it is curious to contrast with Hugo's nearly contemporary "Dernier jour d'un condamné." The Naturalists see their process reflected in Julien's relations to Mathilde and her father, in which there are touches worthy of Flaubert. But as a whole the characters are too "different," as Stendhal would say, from ordinary mortals to suit the disciples of Zola; and Bourget justly sees in "Le Rouge et le noir," as well as in "La Chartreuse de Parme," forerunners of the new psychologic fiction.

But "La Chartreuse de Parme" is indeed all things to all men. Its best-known episode, the battle of Waterloo, strongly recalls the finest work of Zola. Bourget may discern his method once more in the development of the character of Fabrice, who is in many respects a retouching of Julien, essaying the church on the collapse of the empire, but ending his life of adventure in an archiepiscopal see; and both these elements are combined with a strong dose of Romantic passion and so-called "local color." Here the minute dissection of motive alternates with duels, dungeons, poisons, and hair-breadth 'scapes, that suggest without equalling Hugo or Dumas, and import into the Italy of Bonaparte the untamed passions of the Borgias. The characters are still "different;" but the author threw himself into his work with more sympathetic interest, and gave French fiction its first serious study of foreign life.

An unfinished fragment, "Le Chasseur vert," promised more than Stendhal had yet realized in fiction. though the general theme remains the same. Indeed,

it seems as though in his four novels the author had undertaken to project his own condition into four different environments. "What would Henri Beyle have become if he had been an aristocrat?" he asks in "Armance." "What if he had been a plebeian, or an Italian cadet?" he inquires of himself in "Le Rouge et le noir" and the "Chartreuse." And in his last novel he thinks himself of the aristocracy of wealth, the son of a banker, who for sheer ennui enters the army, though he knows it has little to offer save garrison routine. A realistic study of this life, with a faint background of clerical and political intrigue, is all that remains of "Le Chasseur vert."

It would be difficult to resume better the general impression that Stendhal leaves on the modern reader than is done at the close of Zola's striking essay. Stendhal, he says in effect, is great when his logic applies itself to incontestable facts of human nature, but he is only a dilettante of nature when he puts his superior and "different" characters on the rack. He introduced analysis into French fiction, and in it he was exquisite and unique, but he lacked the broad human sympathy of the great romancers. Life is more simple than he made it. Hence he founded no school, though his work was admired and studied by Balzac and Mérimée. The moment of his greatest influence on French letters was, as he had prophesied with curious foresight, in 1880, when the more thoughtful men of letters were beginning to turn from the false and dogmatic Naturalism of Zola, with his persistent mockery of "metaphysical jumping-jacks," of "the continuous and exclusive study of the functions of the cerebrum," and that cynical question, "What became of the nobility of the brain when the belly was sick?"

Men who shrank from these ethics of the dust saw in Stendhal the possibility of a psychological naturalism, and for a time Bourget and his most brilliant followers studied Stendhal, till they came to assimilate and reproduce his very phrases and characters.[1]

Far the greatest figure, however, in the fiction of this period is Honoré de Balzac,[2] the tragic story of whose life is in some measure involved in any effort to measure his genius. He was three years older than Hugo, and was trained as a lawyer, but no discouragement could divert him from literature. To procure resources that might enable him to give himself wholly to letters, he embarked in speculations that left him in financial straits from which his improvidence never permitted him wholly to extricate himself. Determined to win his livelihood by his pen, he practised his hand in youthful romances with which he wisely refused to burden his future reputation, and at thirty began the great series of his "Comédie humaine," though that

[1] Cp. Rod, Stendhal, p. 151.

[2] Born 1799; died 1850. Œuvres, twenty-four or fifty-five volumes, beside two of correspondence and additional letters first published in "Revue de Paris," from February, 1894, to March, 1895. Of the fifty-five volumes above, ten are occupied by youthful tales, three by the "Contes drolatiques," and two by dramas. The rest contain the "Comédie humaine," of which there is also an edition in forty-seven volumes with a valuable index to characters appended to each work.

Bibliography: Louvenjoul, Histoire des Œuvres de H. de Balzac. Biography: Ferry, Balzac et ses amis; Wormeley, Memoir of Balzac; Lanson in "Revue bleue," May, 1895. Criticism: Taine, Nouveaux essais de critique et d'histoire; Faguet, xix. siècle; Zola, Romanciers naturalistes; Flat, Essais sur Balzac, 2 vols.; Sainte-Beuve, Portraits contemporains, i. 432, and Causeries, v. 443. A convenient dictionary of characters is: Cerfbeer et Christophe, Répertoire de la Comédie humaine (reviewed in France, Vie littéraire, i. 145). Abstracts of plots may be found in the otherwise valueless Barrière, L'Œuvre de Balzac. Louvenjoul, op. cit. p. 382, reprints an order for reading the novels suggested by Alphonse Boulé.

title was not given to it till 1843, nor the plan of connecting the novels at all conceived till the task was well advanced (1833).

Even this maturer work was produced under pressure, and often betrays the fact, though the Correspondence alone reveals the constant harassing under which his great genius labored, and shows how few bright rays came to lighten his life. He had not even the consolation of unchallenged recognition of his talent, for he had never been willing to crook the pregnant hinges of the knee to a venal press, and those who had praised "Les Chouans," his first acknowledged story, received with studied injustice far stronger works of an author who roused both their envy and their fear. This stung him to a scathing exhibition of the degradation of Parisian journalism, and after the appearance of "Les Illusions perdues" there was almost a conspiracy to hinder the wide circulation of his books and the general recognition of his talent. Yet Balzac was well paid according to the standards of the time. He could have discharged his debts and laughed at his detractors, but he never acquired habits of methodical economy, he travelled freely and even extravagantly, doubled the cost of his publishing by erratic methods of composition and correction, and so, largely by his own fault, lived and died in daily dread of the "privy paw" of the sheriff.

The fundamental materialism of his strongly developed character was stamped on features that are said to have resembled those of Nero, and found still further expression in a huge frame that resisted for years anxieties and labors that seem almost incredible. At times he wrote eighteen hours a day, and usually twelve even when travelling. His letters to the Countess

Hanska, afterward his wife, are full of allusions to the goading of his fagged mind "in the midst of protested bills, business annoyances, the most cruel financial straits, in utter solitude and lack of all consolation."[1] But it may well be that just such a spur was essential to force his genius to rapid development and steady production. Under more favorable auspices a man of his temper would surely have wasted some, perhaps most, of his energy on forms of literature to which his talent was less suited, such as the drama, for which he had always a predilection, or even in commerce and politics, with which his books show continual preoccupation. Circumstances forced his talent along the line of least resistance, and so of greatest progress. But though he was never free from the spur of anxiety, the great tragedy of his life was reserved for its close. For sixteen years he had loved the Countess Hanska, and when at last all obstacles to their union were overcome, Balzac was sinking under the disease that in a few months cost him his life.

The "Comédie humaine" is like a tower of Babel[2] that the hand of the architect had not and could never have had time to finish. Some walls seem ready to fall with age. The builder has taken whatever material fell to his hand, plaster, cement, stone, marble, even sand and mud from the ditch, and has built his gigantic tower without heeding always harmony of lines or balanced proportions, mingling with the care-

[1] He says he wrote the first fifty sheets of "Les Illusions perdues" in three days, and "La Vieille fille" in the same interval. "La Porte brisée," the close of "L'Enfant maudit," was "composed in a few hours of moral and physical agony." "The Secret of the Ruggieri," "The Atheist's Mass," and "Facino Cane," each in a single night.

[2] This paragraph follows and in part reproduces a sustained metaphor of Zola, op. cit. p. 3.

less power of genius the grandiose and the vulgar, the exquisite and the barbarous, the good and the bad. And so it remains to-day one of those cyclopean monuments, full of splendid halls and wretched corners, divided by broad corridors and narrow passages, with superpiled stories in varied architecture. You may lose your way in it twenty times, and always feel that there are still undiscovered miseries and splendors. It is a world, a world of human creation, built by a marvellous mason who at times was also an artist. Time has worn holes in it. A cornice has fallen here and there, but the marble stands whitened by time. The workman has built his tower with such an instinct of the great and eternal that when all the mud and sand has been washed away, the monument will still appear on the horizon like the silhouette of a city.

It is impossible here, and unnecessary to our immediate purpose, to attempt to guide the reader through all these corridors and passages, into all the chambers of this monument of imagination and industry, that Taine did not scruple to call "the greatest storehouse of documents on human nature since Shakspere," where "the secretary of society," as Balzac loved to call himself, has undertaken "by infinite patience and courage to compose for the France of the nineteenth century that history of morals that the old civilizations of Rome, Greece, and Egypt left untold," to "draw up the inventory of its vices and virtues," and to lay bare the greed and social ambition that seemed to him the mainspring of its multiplex activities.

The mighty maze of these well-nigh hundred stories is divided by Balzac into Scenes of Private Life and of Parisian, Provincial, Political, Military, and Country Life, to which he appends groups of Analytical and

Philosophical Studies; and it is most fruitful to follow this division in a study of his genius, for an attempt to place the novels in the order of their internal chronology would involve an inextricable confusion, and little is gained by considering the order in which they were written,[1] for this is of less significance with Balzac than with most great authors.

His Scenes of Private Life are naturally stories of ideals, illusions, tentative efforts of young men, and of ingenuous maidenhood and motherly pride. In comparison with his other work the emotion here is less strong, and the characters less complex, though this section includes some interesting portraits of his contemporaries,[2] and a tale of horror, "La Grande Bretèche," where Balzac's genius shines with a lurid glow that is more characteristic of his Parisian novels.

Provincial Life offered Balzac a broader canvas for the more constant and normal types of human nature, while Paris naturally fostered the extreme and exceptional. It is in the former environment that the "characteristic little facts" of his exact realism appear

[1] This is given in detail in Louvenjoul, op. cit. pp. 315–328. That of the masterpieces is: La Peau de chagrin, 1830–1831; Jésus Christ en Flandre, 1831; Le Colonel Chabert, 1832; Contes drolatiques, 1832, 1833, 1837; La Grande Bretèche, 1832; Le Curé de Tours, 1832; Louis Lambert, 1832; Eugénie Grandet, 1833; Ferragus, 1833; La Duchesse de Langleais, 1834; Séraphita, 1834; La Recherche de l'absolu, 1834; Le Père Goriot, 1834; Les Illusions perdues, 1837, 1839, 1848; Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes, 1838–1847; Un Ménage de garçon, 1841–1842; Les Parents pauvres (Cousin Pons, Cousine Bette), 1846–1847.

[2] Camille Maupin in "Beatrix" combines the mind of George Sand with the exterior of the Romantic actress, Georges, and Claude Vignon is apparently Balzac himself. Madame Schonz in the same novel is a connecting link between Hugo's "Marion de Lorme" and Augier's "Olympe." In "Modeste Mignon," Canalis seems compounded of Chateaubriand and Lamartine, though he flatters neither.

in the most brilliantly minute descriptions, though marred at times by diffuse archæology in their local color. It is in his Provincial Scenes, too, that Balzac touches most nearly the founder of the new Naturalism, Flaubert. Here the formation of character that had been the subject of the previous group gives place to the shock of characters already formed, and money replaces love as the mainspring of action.

The finest novel of this group, if not of the whole series, is "Eugénie Grandet," whose heroine is Balzac's noblest female character, while the book itself is one of the most powerful studies of avarice in the literature of the world. And hardly second to the psychological interest is the graphic power of epic description that gives to the miser's house and to his strong-room the same individualized personality that Zola has bestowed on the mine in "Germinal," or the locomotive in "La Bête humaine." Each detail of his minute description serves to mark a step in the progress of Grandet's vice toward monomania. There was in this miser, Balzac says, "something of the tiger and of the boa-constrictor. He could lie in wait, watch his prey, jump on it, — and then opening the jaws of his purse he would swallow a pile of *écus*, and lie down tranquilly like the serpent in his digestion, impassive, cold, methodical." Step by step his passion absorbs his whole being, till at the close he is only a paralytic maniac, clutching in his death-struggle the crucifix to his lips, because it sparkles with gold, and gasping to his child the last words: "You will have to give an account hereafter to me for all I leave you."

No other novel in this group approaches "Eugénie Grandet;" but several have a place in the development of fiction. Among these the most striking is the

anti-clerical "Curé de Tours," the first of a series of tales of like tendency, of which the chief are Sue's "Wandering Jew" and Fabre's "Abbé Tigrane." One sees here what fears seemed justifiable to the Liberals of the Restoration, and one comprehends better the over-wrought excitement of Michelet's lectures on the Jesuits. Mesmerism too, which, as recent events show, is a ghost not wholly laid, is curiously mingled with the realism of "Ursule Mirouet," and had indeed already appeared in the philosophic studies "Séraphita" and "Louis Lambert." [1]

But it is by his Parisian Scenes that Balzac exercised the greatest influence and won the greatest fame. "Eugénie Grandet" is the only provincial story that will rival in popular regard or critical favor "Le Père Goriot," "Les Parents pauvres," "Les Illusions perdues," or "Les Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes." The general average is higher here, and the novels are more closely interlinked by recurring characters. Some of these are indeed products of a purely romantic imagination, such as the Vautrin of the "Splendeurs;" others are the result of minute observation, such as Goriot, Rastignac, Rubempré, or else prophetic deductions from incipient social tendencies, such as De Marsay, the skeptical *blagueur*, "who believed neither in men nor women, in God nor the devil," and both in his character and his career was a

[1] "Un Ménage de garçon," from this group, an uneven book with an admirable study of shifty Parisian poverty, contains in Joseph Bridau a portrait of the artist Delacroix. Among these Provincial Scenes is also "Le Lys dans la vallée," which Faguet thinks "the worst novel I know." Its style appears to Lanson "a pasty rigmarole," while Barrière regards it as "Balzac's most elaborate study of the psychology of love." It certainly contains some of its author's best descriptive

strange anticipation of the Duc de Morny. So, too, his Madame Marneffe in "Cousine Bette" is the archetypal study of the "Demi-monde," in its original sense, and the Esther of the "Splendeurs" anticipates Marguerite in the "Dame aux camélias." Indeed it is not possible here even to name all the characters of Balzac's Paris that have left their mark on men's minds, so that one speaks as familiarly of a Gobseck, a Goriot, a Remonencq, or a Bixiou as one does of a fable of La Fontaine or of a character of Racine.

As novels of plot the "Splendeurs," "Ferragus," and the "Duchesse de Langleais" hold the highest place in the "Comédie humaine;" but the finest psychological touches are to be sought rather in "Père Goriot" and in "Cousine Bette." Yet the short stories in this group are also remarkable. "Gobseck," a worthy pendant to "Eugénie Grandet," contains one of the most successful inspirations of the shudder in literature, afterward so successfully cultivated by Maupassant, and "Le Colonel Chabert" is a masterpiece of powerful condensation. Its description of the battle of Eylau bears comparison with Mérimée's "Prise de la redoute," and it might be hard to find elsewhere a more effective picture of the dusty purlieus of the law, which Balzac says would be the most awful of social *boutiques*, were it not for "the humid sacristies where prayers are weighed and sold like groceries, and the second-hand dressmakers' shops, whose frippery "blasts all the illusions of life by showing where its festivals end." In his duel with French law the gallant colonel's reason fails, and the story leaves him a pathetic, harmless, hopeless lunatic.

This story revealed great powers of military evocation, and it seems strange that his Military Scenes

should count but one novel, the youthful "Chouans," and the curious fragment on animal fascination, "Une Passion dans le désert." Politics, too, bore a larger part in Balzac's speculations than in the "Comédie humaine." But there is more of the Christian Socialist than of the romancer in "L'Envers de l'histoire contemporaine," or in its country pendant, "Le Médecin de campagne." The author's most extreme political views are in the study of "Catherine de Médicis," and the story "Z. Marcas;" but from a literary point of view far the finest of the Political Scenes is "Une Épisode sous la terreur." These sociological essays are continued in the Scenes of Country Life, among which "Les Paysans" deals with peasant proprietorship in a way that might have preserved from his worst error the author of "La Terre," while "Le Médecin de campagne" is interesting chiefly for its exhibition of the way in which the peasants, and perhaps the author, regarded the career of the great Napoleon.

We should naturally look to the Philosophical Studies for Balzac's most sustained efforts in the analysis of character, which here tends more to the typical, and so lends itself peculiarly to moral and social satire. Here, too, the mystical element in Balzac's nature finds its most unrestrained expression in "Louis Lambert's" speculations on the will, the scientific monomania of "La Recherche de l'absolu," or the Swedenborg-inspired ecstasies of "Séraphita." Most noteworthy in this group is "La Peau de chagrin,' a study of the workings of ambition in the hypersensitive nature of Raphael, who struggles in the thorny hedge of reality, and discovers too late that "millionaires are their own executioners," only to die a victim of fulfilled desire. It is curious to contrast the insolent luxury of Taillefer's

feast in this book with Petronius' classic realism in his feast of Trimalchio (Petr. Satyr. 30–78); but to the thoughtful reader the chief interest of "La Peau de chagrin" lies in its epigrammatic scourging of the various phases of satiety, always sombre and often profound. Among the shorter studies in this group is the strangely fascinating "Jésus Christ en Flandre," whose doctrine is: "Ask nothing great from interests, for these are transitory. Await all from the sentiments, from religion, and patriotic faith." [1]

The so-called Analytical Studies are in reality more or less immature satires on marriage, that call for as little notice as his dramas, of which "Mercadet" alone survives in the repertory of the National Theatre. Not so the "Contes drolatiques," which reveal Balzac more completely than any other of his works, — the splendid animal, full-blooded, expansive, a little heavy, a little vulgar, with a Rabelaisian plainness of speech and "laughter shaking both his sides," with more delight in Gallic than in Attic salt. Here, and perhaps here only, where he lets himself go and throws off all artificial constraint, his style becomes at times admirable for its own sake; and though it must be confessed that the "Contes" are as ill adapted for general reading as "Pantagruel," yet they will remain a delight to the Pantagruelists of many generations.

[1] This group shows in "Melmoth" the influence of Goethe's "Faust;" in "Gambara" and "Massimila Doni" that of Stendhal. Hawthorne has imitated "L'Élixir de longue vie," Zola's "L'Œuvre" contains exactly the thesis of "Le Chef d'œuvre inconnu," Ohnet has taken from "Les Marana" the climax of "Serge Panine," and Augier a part of his "Maître Guérin" from "La Recherche de l'absolu." The shudder in literature may be felt again in "El Verdugo," and the battle-scene in "L'Adieu" rivals that in "Le Colonel Chabert."

If, now, we try to resume the characteristics, and to gain a final impression of Balzac's monumental work that may serve to fix his place in the literature of the century, we shall be struck rather with the robust fulness of his mind, the feverish activity of his imagination, than by the adequacy of the expression that he gave to it. Ideas never failed him, but he had sometimes "the vertigo of his own imagination." He occasionally obscured his thought by an obtrusion of learning, or warped it by prejudices that we associate with vulgar minds. His trenchant and heavy satire is seldom enlivened by the play of wit, for he takes his task most seriously, sure that he is "a guiding light, or at least a physician who gravely feels the pulse of the century." So by his zeal to tell us not only what he sees, but what he thinks about it, he misses the objectivity of the later Naturalists. They are consistent philosophic determinists and pessimists. He is by turns a cynical materialist and a visionary mystic.

Balzac had to a remarkable degree the power of seeing things in detail. Each face had to him its distinctive feature, and he preferred an individualized portrait to an idealized beauty. In a similar way he specialized inanimate objects. But in both cases the vividness of the image sometimes hid from the author the associations it might evoke in the reader; hence arise lapses of taste even more grotesque than Hugo's, especially when he attempts to be delicate or sentimental. For he leaves no class of fiction untried. With Protean deftness he becomes by turns a genuine romantic romancer, in the style of Anne Radcliffe, an elegiac and mystic romancer, an admirable realistic novelist, and occasionally so grossly

and violently realistic that he ceases to be realistic at all.[1] There are times when Balzac seems a caterer who has undertaken to furnish whatever the public desires, in the style that it prefers, from the country idyl to the detective story. But one always feels that he is more at home with Madame Marneffe than with Séraphita. His Romantic side was the result of environment. It shows least of his individuality and genius. He endures by his power of minute observation, by his ability to paint men and things in such detail as to make them more real to his readers than their own superficial impressions. We feel that had Grandet or Goriot been our neighbors they would be less understood, less individual to us, than Balzac has made them.

Of course, such a talent shows itself to best advantage in that social sphere with which both author and reader are most in touch and sympathy, that is, with the bourgeoisie, or, again, with such classes as are most under the dominance of environment and circumstance, that is, with artisans and laborers as well as with the grossly materialistic and criminal. "Vulgar natures," Balzac writes to George Sand, "interest me more than they do you. I magnify them, idealize them inversely in their ugliness or folly," giving them sometimes "horrible or grotesque proportions." This distortion of naturalism is with him, as with Zola, the result of inferring character from action. His observation is correct, but the constructive psychology that he bases on it is faulty, and his conclusions are exaggerated.[2] His world becomes a struggle for money and place, in which all tender sentiments are withered,

[1] Cp. Faguet, op. cit. pp. 417–420, which is here closely followed.
[2] This is essentially the conclusion of Faguet, op. cit. pp. 434–437.

or saved as by fire. Balzac's experience of the world made him skeptical. He had seldom seen strength combined with the gentler virtues. His good men and women — Pons, Schmucke, Henrietta, Madame Bridau — are victims of their own simple-heartedness, the natural prey of the Marneffes, the Philippes, and the Remonencqs.

The "Comédie humaine" counts in Cerfbeer's Repertory two thousand actors. Of these many only cross the stage, others are but the stuff that dreams are made of, but a great number remain that have an individuality of flesh and blood. Most of these, however, like the personages of Dickens, are simpler than nature, characters in La Bruyère's sense, not balanced studies like those of Stendhal or of the modern psychological school. They are centred around some trait, and since they admit of no psychic conflict, they lack the interest that comes of moral victory or defeat. When occasionally Balzac attempts to exhibit such an inner struggle, he does but show his limitations, yet none has rendered better than he the great conflict of classes in the transition between the aristocratic and the democratic régime. None saw so clearly as he the social significance of the revolution in land tenure that resulted from the sale of the confiscated domain in the early years of the Republic, nor the disintegrating fermentation that followed the dispersion of the Grande Armée.[1]

Among Balzac's contemporaries George Sand owed the inspiration, though not the development, of her studies of nature and country life to his example. In the next generation his realistic observation served as a guide to the early efforts of Flaubert. Through him in his minute observation, and directly in his essen-

[1] Cp. Faguet, l. c. pp. 424–433.

tially Romantic exaggeration, Balzac has been a power with all the later doctrinaire Naturalists, but the Psychological School owes less to his method or example than to those of Stendhal.

It remains to speak of Mérimée,[1] who curiously unites the characteristics of Sand, Stendhal, and Balzac. He had the essentially pessimistic and sombre observation of the author of the "Comédie humaine," the picturesque power but not the eighteenth-century buoyancy of Sand, and he shared with Stendhal a keen psychological insight and a morbid dread of being deceived into a show of sympathy where none was due. But to all this he joined what none of them possessed, — a high-bred, impassive, aristocratic calm. He was always courteous and obliging, often even to the extent of sacrifice,[2] but always on the watch to restrain any expression of emotional interest or expansion of heart. Hence in his writing he cultivated the most absolute impersonality, and this was his most important contribution to the following generation.

Mérimée was but twenty-two when in the exuberance of youth he imposed on the exotic taste of a confiding public his "Théâtre de Clara Gazul" as a bit of

[1] Born 1803; died 1870. He was Inspector of Historical Monuments from 1831, and Senator from 1853, having been personally attached to the family of Empress Eugénie. Chronology of his principal works: Théâtre de Clara Gazul, 1825; La Guzla, 1826; La Jacquerie, 1828; Le Chronique de Charles IX., 1829. Short stories, — among them Tamango, La Vénus d'Ille, Matteo Falcone, Colomba, 1830–1841; Essai sur la guerre sociale, 1841; Carmen, 1847; Les Faux Démétrius, 1854; Mélanges historiques et littéraires, 1855. Four volumes of letters have been posthumously published.

Criticism: Filon, Mérimée et ses amis; D'Haussonville, Mérimée (reviewed by France, Vie littéraire, ii. 47); Faguet, xix. siècle; Lanson, p. 987; and Fortnightly Review, December, 1890. Of historic interest is Sainte-Beuve, Portraits contemporains, ii. 361.

[2] See Revue bleue, January, 1895.

ultra-Spanish dramatic art, and that with such success that he repeated the mystification two years later in the pseudo-Illyrian poems of "La Guzla." Years afterward Mérimée explained the spirit in which these two books were written. He says that he and his Romantic brethren then thought "there was no salvation without local color," by which they understood the study of manners. Hence in poetry they admired only the foreign and the ancient. Scotch Border Ballads or the "Romancero of the Cid" seemed incomparable masterpieces. So, in order to get money to study foreign manners, Mérimée conceived the idea of evolving them from his imagination. He read such travels as came to hand and an opportune government report, "learned five or six words of Slavonic, and wrote the collection of ballads in a fortnight," so easily that he came to doubt the saving grace of "local color" after all, the more perhaps as certain learned German litterati, unwarned by their experience with Ossian, had discovered in these pretended translations valuable contributions to folk-lore, and even traces of the primitive Dalmatian metres, until at last the simple anagram of Guzla and Gazul dawned on their minds, and diverted their philological acumen to less obviously fruitless labors.

From "La Guzla" Mérimée turned to mediæval France, from the exotic to the semi-barbaric, and from poetry to prose. He wrote of the Peasants' War, of the Massacre of St. Bartholomew, and in "La Famille de Carvajal" pushed, perhaps for the only time, fantastic horror beyond the border line of good taste. None of these stories, however, equalled in concentrated power the half-dozen pages of "La Redoute," one of the most finished battle pictures in literature; nor did they rival

the grim horror of "Tamango," more ghastly than any fancy of Poe, or of the most morose of modern pessimists, and all the more grewsome because of the writer's ironic calm. "One must be humane," says the proprietor of the slave-ship to his outfitter. "We ought to leave a negro at least five feet by two to enjoy himself during a transit of six weeks or more. After all, they are men, like the whites." In other stories of this period[1] one feels oppressed by the fatalism of crime; and to this the "Venus of Ille" adds an element of demonology of which there is indeed a touch in all Mérimée's conceptions of love.

Historical and antiquarian studies now divided his interest, but he turned his travels to literary account in "Colomba" and "Carmen," the latter probably still the most successful treatment of the Spanish gypsy, the former surely the best expression of the Corsican spirit, of its rough and ready justice, its sturdy independence and fierce feuds. Until the "Mariage de Loti," and perhaps even since that masterpiece, "Colomba," in spite of its brevity, for it counts but two hundred pages, is more instinct with exotic life than any book in the language.

Mérimée chose for his device the Greek motto "Remember to doubt." All his work breathes a profound disillusion. One feels this in the mystifications of the "Gazul" and the "Guzla," in the quizzical endings that end nothing of the "Chronicle" and of the carefully elaborated "Venus of Ille," and most of all in his indifference either to his own fame or to the genuineness of the impression that his work produces. Now, such an attitude is hardly professional, and perhaps it is not unjust to say that Mérimée was always

[1] E. g., La Partie de tric-trac, La Vase étrusque, Matteo Falcone.

essentially an amateur, whether in literature, in art, or in archæology. He has himself said that in the arts one can excel only by entire surrender to them, but that, he continues, "would make one a little *bête*," and *bête* he was resolved on no account to be.

Mérimée's interest, like Stendhal's, lies rather in men than in things. Scenes he will seldom describe save for their immediate effect on the action. Then, indeed, he does it admirably. Like Stendhal again, he affects situations and characters that give free play to passion, but he differs from him radically in the precise concision of his style. If the scenes of his tales are for the most part foreign or strange, Mérimée is still a thorough realist. His Spanish gypsy girl seems wholly natural to her environment, and we feel that the environment itself is true to a nature, though not to ours. So, too, he has the art to persuade us that his Colomba is the natural product of Corsican training and traditions, and we feel that if somewhere out of our range of vision there are outlaws, smugglers, untamed men and women, then this will be a true picture of that "border-land between culture and savagery."

But, in spite of the impersonality he cultivates, Mérimée's naturalism is tinged with an ironical pessimism. While the reader, with more faith than he in Mother Nature, is looking for some tender sentiment, he will unveil a ghastlier horror, or perhaps express a regret that "assassination is no longer one of our social usages." Civil war, murder, treachery, or some power not ourselves that makes for evil, lies at the base of all his fiction, though toward the end this tone is subordinated to the growing severity of his taste.[1] He never ceased, however, "to despise men too

[1] It hardly tinged "Arsène Guillot."

much to have faith in their progress;" and so he, more even than Balzac, promoted the pessimistic weakening of the will that marks a considerable section of the literature of the *fin de siècle.*

The language of Mérimée is singularly limpid and pure, simple and remarkable for its sober condensation. It has been compared to a plate of glass through which all that he wishes to show, appears, while it leaves itself no sensation. But if the attention of the critic is concentrated on it one observes beneath the first impression of perfect ease and naturalness a gradual revelation of art, until at last it will seem as though all had been subordinated to an æsthetic purpose that had produced its full effect while still wholly unrecognized at the very first reading. Herein lies Mérimée's enduring charm. He is, among the novelists of his time, pre-eminently the artist.

CHAPTER XII.

MODERN FICTION. — II. THE NATURALISTIC SCHOOL.

BALZAC and his fellows had inaugurated the study of contemporary life in fiction; but both he and they had usually been diligent to seek such phases of it as had dramatic interest, and to arrange their observations so as to heighten this effect. That departure from the normal train of daily life was a concession, perhaps a fundamentally necessary concession, to Idealism and so to Romanticism; and this it was the endeavor of the next generation at all cost to exclude. Now, in so far as Naturalism effects a closer and more exact observation, a simpler and more robust style, it is the natural and healthy reaction from Idealism, for these are the two points between which the literary needle has swayed since the beginning of literature. But the Naturalism of the men we are about to study went much further than this. Zola announced his intention "to study man as he is, not your metaphysical jumping-jack, but the physical man, determined by environment, acting under the play of all his organs." "What a farce," he continues, "is this continuous and exclusive study of the functions of the brain! . . . What becomes of the nobility of the brain if the belly is sick?" Hence some ardent disciples have jumped at the conclusion that the novel was not to be psychological but abdominal; and this certainly is the tendency of these "slices of crude life," this topsy-turvy idealism

of an art which they have striven to make wholly impersonal, unsympathetic, and materialistic, and have at least succeeded in making wholly unnatural. It is the function of criticism to show that these men who have made Naturalism a byword were false Naturalists, and that it was because they were false Naturalists, and only in so far as they were false Naturalists, that they discredited Naturalism in discrediting themselves.

Flaubert[1] marks the transition from Romanticism to this phase of materialistic realism. He exhibits exceptionally the continuity of literary development through reforms and changes that to those who preached them seemed radical and revolutionary. Not, indeed, that Flaubert ever associated himself with the extreme and intolerant claims of the theoretic doctrinaire critics of his school. He was a tolerant eclectic who combined the qualities of the men of his youthful admiration, Hugo and Chateaubriand, with those of his own disciples, Zola and Maupassant. This gives his work its peculiar interest, and an importance greater than its comparatively small bulk might suggest.

Flaubert grew up in the heyday of the Romantic movement, and shared its enthusiasms to the full. Writ-

[1] Born 1821; died 1880. Œuvres, 8 vols., and Correspondance, 4 vols. Chronology of the more important novels: Mme. Bovary, 1857; Salammbô, 1862; L'Éducation sentimentale, 1869; La Tentation de Saint-Antoine, 1874; Trois contes, 1877; Bouvard et Pécuchet (unfinished).

Criticism: Brunetière, Roman naturaliste, pp. 29 and 161; Zola, Romanciers naturalistes, pp. 125–223; Bourget, Essais, p. 111; Tarver, Flaubert as seen in his Works and Correspondence; Sprouck, Les Artistes littéraires, 239; Sainte-Beuve, Causeries, xiii. 346; Pellissier, op. cit. p. 326; Lanson, op. cit. p. 1047. Saintsbury, Essays on French Novelists, offers a mild antidote to some opinions expressed here and in chapters v. and xiii.

ing of 1840, he says: "Our dreams in college days were superbly extravagant, the last full flowering of Romanticism, . . . maintained by a provincial environment and making strange ebullitions in our brains. . . . We were not only troubadours, rebels, Orientals; we were, more than all, artists. Our school tasks over, literature began. We put out our eyes reading novels in the dormitory; we carried daggers in our pockets. . . . One of us blew out his brains; another hung himself by his cravat. . . . What hatred we had of the commonplace; what aspirations to grandeur; what respect for the masters; how we admired Hugo!" [1]

Flaubert never lost sight of his Romantic ideals; but they had fallen on unromantic times, and mocked him so constantly that the vulgarity of life became at last his all-absorbing thought, and his contempt of the bourgeoisie a passionate hatred that he devoted his whole life to express in a form whose perfection should make it an enduring monument of human pettiness. This thought runs like a red thread through all his novels, whether the scene be a Norman town or ancient Carthage, the Paris of the Second Republic or the Egyptian hermitages of the Thebaid. Everywhere and always to strive for the ideal is to invite the heart-sickness of disillusion.

Flaubert is then a Romantic pessimist, — a species that has tended not a little to confuse the popular conception of pessimism itself. His pessimism is a sentiment. "Strange," he says, "that I was born with so little faith in happiness. Even as a boy, I had a complete presentiment of life. It was like the smell of a nauseating kitchen escaping through a ventilating hole. One had no need to taste to know that it was

[1] Condensed from Bourget's citation, l. c. p. 130.

sickening." If he is to be judged by his fiction, he regarded reading, and indeed intellectual progress generally, as likely to increase the evils of life. All his protagonists are nursed on literature. Books and meditation turn the brains of his Saint Antony and of his Emma Bovary, his Frédéric is the victim of a "sentimental education," and Salammbô has drunk deep of the legends of her people.

This pessimistic cast of mind produced in Flaubert, as it often has in others, a passion for formal beauty. The union in him of a deep poetic feeling with the keen analytic spirit [1] produced a bitter sense of disproportion between what might be and what is; and this made his literary composition labored and slow to a degree that has become proverbial. Six years was the average interval between his longer novels, and he spent a score in elaborating the "Temptation of Saint Antony." He made minute studies, accumulated huge masses of notes. For an episode of a few pages he might consult a hundred volumes. And he was as meticulous in regard to form as to matter. Each paragraph was subjected to repeated scrutinies, obtrusive relatives were sedulously banished, the recurrence of vowel or consonant sounds was sought or avoided, and the melody of each sentence tested by loud declamation until it was attuned to satisfy his sensitive ear. He cited with approval the doctrine of Buffon, that "the beauties of style are truths as useful, and perhaps more precious, for the public than those contained in the subject itself;" and, following to their logical conclusion the æsthetics of pessimism, with an instinct of harmony that he caught from Chateaubriand, he resolved to base a purely objective art on the ruins

[1] Cp. Bourget, op. cit. p. 136.

of Romanticism,[1] and proclaimed the paradox: "Art, having its reason in itself, should not be regarded as a means," — a view from which he deduced a severely objective impersonality in his fiction that differentiated it sharply from Romanticism and made it a model for the generation nursed in the scientific determinism of Taine.

For "Madame Bovary" is the illustration in fiction of Taine's psychology and literary criticism, and that is what gives it its cardinal significance in the evolution of the modern novel. Flaubert's characters may be, as Bourget has called them, "walking associations of ideas;" but they are not, like the creations of Stendhal, abstractions projected against space. They are psychologically much more superficial, but they are fixed in an environment of precise and definite "significant little facts," which are, it must be confessed, occasionally surcharged with superfluous erudition. Thus Flaubert, more than Chateaubriand and more than any of the later Naturalists, combined so much as he discerned of psychological reality with its physical conditions and manifestations: he illustrated thoughts by material images, and systematically substituted sensation for feeling, the image for the idea.[2] He therefore habitually called on environment to direct thought and evoke past experience, and so he introduced into modern fiction a device that, especially in the hands of Daudet, has added greatly to the rapidity with which the action of a novel may be developed.

Flaubert also parted company with Romantic methods by the complete suppression of all exaggeration

[1] See his letters from 1850 to 1855, passim, and Brunetière, Poésie lyrique, ii. 128.

[2] Cp. Brunetière, op. cit. p. 171.

in scene or character. He avoided all complication of plot or intrigue. His stories owe their interest to reproductive, not to creative imagination. He seeks to present life in its manifold complexity, not to say in its petty puerility, as fully and as truly as possible; therefore in modern life he takes types of the mediocre, the commonplace, the vulgar, with a self-tormenting devotion to his theory of art; for he hated the characters that he drew, and his natural sympathies were so romantically effervescent that he was seldom able to restrain them in the society of his literary intimates. He has spoken of himself as of one with nerves laid bare, who shudders at the touch of the vulgarity he delights to pillory; and after each accomplished task he sought an opportunity to "roar his fill" in some exotic scene. So "Salammbô" follows "Madame Bovary," and the "Temptation" succeeds "L'Éducation sentimentale"; so, too, in his "Trois contes" he repaid himself for the restraint of "Cœur simple" by "Hérodias" and "Saint-Julien l'hospitalier," and if he had completed "Bouvard et Pécuchet," it was his intention to ease himself of that monument to human stupidity by a tale of Leonidas and Thermopylæ.

"Madame Bovary" is the story of a wife educated beyond her station, whose unfulfilled romantic aspirations drag her step by step to the depths of vulgar infidelity, so that at last suicide seems her only refuge from moral nausea. This warning against the dangers of romantic sentiment is enforced by photographic pictures of bourgeois life in its banality, true masterpieces of suppressed irony. Even the minor characters are drawn with remarkable vividness; and one of them, the druggist Homais, has become a byword for provincial and philistine narrowness.

Flaubert's first novel was at once type and model for the fiction of the next generation. It was the most easily comprehended and by far the most popular of his books, the first of the minute, passionless reproductions of the platitudes of modern life. But it was not a favorite with Flaubert, and in later years he was wont to speak of it as a youthful error, for he thought that the close conceded too much to the Romantic spirit. So in "Sentimental Education" he carefully eliminated all such appeals to emotion. Here the tragic end is not suicide, but the slow wearing away of ideals under the corroding experiences of life, the abandonment of one ambition after another, and the result, Flaubert's social hell, the monotonous respectability of a provincial town. This study of political and social psychology is a microscopic dissection of human incapacity conducted with labor and patience that bear witness to the morose intensity of the author's incivism. But Flaubert might have remembered what he himself had said, that "disillusion belongs naturally to weak minds," and that "the disgusted are almost always impotent;" so this book, though it does not lack powerful pages, lacks interest and kindly humor because it lacks sympathy. It has found admirers among the writers, but few among the readers, of fiction.

In these stories Flaubert found vent for his antisocial spleen; in "Salammbô" he gave wings to his sombre lyric imagination. He told Sainte-Beuve that in this tale of life at Carthage in the days of its splendor "he wished to fix a mirage by applying to antiquity the methods of the modern novel." So he studied the scenery on the spot, and exhausted the resources of the Imperial Library in his search for

documentary evidences, which he fused by a vast and sustained effort into a complete and consistent evocation that makes this realistic epic the best historical novel of the half-century in France. But the underlying thesis is unchanged. Ideals and aspirations are still wrecked, and drag down those who cherish them. Yet there is none of the complexity of modern life. Salammbô's mystic fatalism owes its charm to its absolute simplicity. The heroine is indeed, as Flaubert said, "a monomaniac, a kind of Saint Theresa, nailed to a fixed idea." It is perhaps from this very simplicity that the characters impress the reader less than the descriptions. The story and its personages leave less mark on the mind than the charge of the elephants, the orgy of the mercenaries, or the long agony of their destruction.

For twenty years the "Temptation of Saint Antony" was Flaubert's favorite task. Here he sought to spread before the reader, in a vision of the Egyptian hermit, the vast panorama of the joy of sense and intellect turning to dust and ashes. In mad procession, all deities, religions, heresies, philosophies, are exhibited, mocked, and cast into the limbo of scornful rejection. Then at last Satan shows the saint the horizon of modern science, from whose immensity he shrinks in terror. Antony seeks refuge from the crushing weight of knowledge in the animal, the vegetable world; and as the night of his temptation ends, he is endeavoring to bury his being in primordial matter. Then in the rising sun appears the image of the Crucified, and Antony betakes himself to prayer. "To take humanity in its cradle, to show it at every hour in blood and filth, to note with care each error, to deduce thence its impotence, misery, and emptiness,

— such was Flaubert's cherished and slowly matured aim." But while this is surely his most learned and thoughtful work, it demands in the reader too much learning and thought, and, above all, too much of the author's own spirit, to enjoy a wide popularity. A time may come when this will seem Flaubert's masterpiece. To us it is by "Madame Bovary" that he marks an epoch in French fiction.

Edmond and Jules de Goncourt[1] show the same delight in minute observation as Flaubert; while in them his elaboration of style becomes a tortured artificiality, a painful striving to translate the shades of thought and emotion into language. They began their literary career with appreciative studies of the art and manners of the eighteenth century, exhibiting an immense accumulation of details, but little power of historical evocation. Then in the last decade of the Empire they published six novels; and since Jules' death Edmond has continued their joint work in

[1] Edmond, b. 1822; Jules, b. 1830, d. 1870. They wrote together the novels: Charles Demailly, 1860; Sœur Philomène, 1861; Renée Mauperin, 1864; Germinie Lacertaux, 1865; Manette Salomon, 1867; Madame Gervaisais, 1869. Historical studies: Histoire de la société française (Révolution et directoire), 1854–1855; La Révolution dans les mœurs, 1854; Portraits intimes du xviii. siècle, 1856–1858; Marie Antoinette, 1858; Les Maîtresses de Louis XV. (Du Barry, Pompadour, Châteauroux, et ses sœurs) 1860, and 1878–1879; La Femme au xviii. siècle, 1862; L'Art au xviii. siècle, 1874; L'Amour au xviii. siècle, 1877. Since Jules' death Edmond has published the novels: La Fille Élisa, 1878; Les Frères Zemganno, 1879; La Faustin, 1882; Chérie, 1884. Historical studies: Watteau, 1876; Prud'hon, 1877; Les Actrices au xviii. siècle, 1885–1890. Autobiography: Journal (7 vols.), 1887–1894.

Criticism: Delzant, Les Goncourt; Spronck, Les Artistes littéraires, 137; Doumic, Portraits d'écrivains, 167; Lemaître, Contemporains, iii. 37; Brunetière, Roman naturaliste, p. 273; Zola, Romanciers naturalistes, p. 223; Bourget, Nouveaux essais.

each field, though with somewhat slackened energy, and, by the publication of their Journal and his own, has thrown a welcome though sometimes indiscreet light on the group of writers who looked to him as their *doyen*. But it is their novels produced jointly that affected the development of fiction, and of these only is it necessary to speak here.

They began with "Charles Demailly," — a satiric picture of petty journalism in the spirit of Balzac's "Illusions perdues," minutely realistic save, perhaps, for the wit with which they have generously endowed these gentry of a muzzled press. Then, in "Sœur Philomène" they extended the borders of fiction to the hospital and clinic, with all their tortured, quivering life, — a dangerous step toward that topsy-turvy Idealism that makes the fancy delve where the Romanticists had let it soar. In "Renée Mauperin" they returned to the bourgeoisie and to pseudo-respectability. This is a study of the "struggle for life" in a commercial and democratic society, — a subject to which Edmond recurred in "La Faustin" and "Chérie," declaring the former to be "a psychological and physiological study of the young girl growing up and educated in the hot-house atmosphere of the capital," while the latter was to be "a monograph of the young girl observed in the environment of wealth, elegance, power, and the best society."

"Renée" is thought by many to be the best of the Goncourts' novels, and is certainly that from which Daudet learned an important part of his art. But the writers of their own school caught more inspiration from "Germinie Lacertaux," which, indeed, its authors regarded as "the model of all that has since been constructed under the name of Realism or Naturalism."

What they meant appears from the preface to the book itself. "We asked ourselves, are there still, for writer or reader in these years of our social equality, classes too unworthy, misfortunes too base, dramas too foul, catastrophes too ignoble in their terror," to be a fit subject for literary treatment? "In a country without caste or legal aristocracy will the miseries of the humble and poor appeal to your interest, emotion, pity, as loudly as the miseries of the great and rich?" This question they endeavored to solve for themselves by pursuing the shaft they had sunk in "Sœur Philomène" still deeper into the sub-strata of society. Their "Germinie" is the true source and ante-type of "Nana" and "L'Assommoir" and all their numerous progeny. We have here what purports to be "a clinic of love" as demonstrated upon the body of a servant-girl, more sinned against than sinning, a festering lily, type of so many who in our social system "find on earth no more place for their bodies than for their hearts;" and, as though to push to its utmost paradox the divorce they proclaimed between fiction and respectability, Edmond afterward took for the subject of his "Fille Élisa" a prostitute from the street.

After "Germinie" these zealots of Naturalism grew more extreme in their wish to present nature unadorned and unarranged. They discarded all the conventions of structure, so that their books ceased to have or indeed to seek artistic unity. They became series of very slightly connected pictures, each executed with masterly exactness, and counting among them some of the greatest *tours de force* in impressionist prose. But the general result of this relentless adherence to "observation" and the "little facts" is,

as Zola admits, to "sterilize their human documents," and to deny the reader an element of interest that the somewhat remarkable *hors d'œuvres* in metaphysics and archæology [1] are far from supplying, for here the Goncourts hardly see clearly beyond their favorite eighteenth century.

In all these novels, as in those of Flaubert, the observation is superficial, external, and dwelling with peculiar insistence on morbid manifestations. So far did this become a second nature that when Jules lay dying his brother noted each symptom of mental decay, and afterward published his observations, thinking "that it might be useful for the history of letters to give this grim study of the agony and death of a man who died of literature." There was in their method and spirit something of the painter's "life school." "Write what you see," was their guiding principle, by which they claimed that they could bring into a character "the genuine life that they got from ten years' observation of a living being." Edmond declares "Chérie" the result of innumerable notes taken with an opera-glass, and "Germinie" a documentary embryo from their joint note-books. "Nowadays," says the preface to this novel, "fiction is beginning to be the serious, passionate, living form of literary study and social investigation; by its psychological analysis and research it becomes the history of contemporary morals." In this it seemed to them to realize what Balzac had attempted and Taine desired; but it must be borne in mind that, like Flaubert, they habitually neglected psychological for external realism, that they

[1] E. g., in "Madame Gervaisais," where, indeed, the slow corrosion by religious enthusiasm of a mind burdened with culture is traced with much skill, and invites comparison with Daudet's "L'Évangéliste."

merged individuality in fatalistic determinism, and so gave the first strong expression in fiction to the lessening of will-power that marks the French literature of the present generation. Their pessimism, even more than Flaubert's, was less rational than emotional. It was an artistic convention, not a living conviction. Flaubert's realism was the product of study and books; theirs had a touch of the reporter, of the *chiffonnier* of human documents, whose work is done not at his desk, but on the street and at the public gathering. One notices this especially in their conversations, which reflect admirably the skeptical *blague* of the Parisian *boulevardier*.

"What differentiates modern from ancient literature," they tell us, "is that the particular tends to replace the general." From this point of view the Goncourts were the most modern of the moderns. But there are inevitable flaws in the method, for the more the novel is made to approximate to experimental science, the more it must sacrifice the interest that comes from imagination as well as from plot and intrigue. Their intensity of observation, "more sensitive than intelligent," left little play for fancy in the reader, and made its possessors feel, they said, as though their flesh were flayed and quivering. They were fascinated, like Taine, by extreme conditions and the morbid nervous states peculiar to the high pressure of modern society, and their own style shows how this nervous tension reacted on the writers themselves. It is in fiction what Symbolism is in poetry, and Impressionism in modern painting. Indeed, the Goncourts are above all else artists in words. They seek to fix a series of sensations by a series of images, and care more for what they call "the nota-

tion of indescribable sensations," for "pinning the adjective," for a striking turn of expression, a vivid picture or epithet, than for grammatical structure or rhetorical correctness. But this is as much as to say that they subordinated clear statement to suggestion, substance to form, the exception to the rule; and in so far they too were Romanticists and false to the truer Naturalism to which they imagined themselves martyrs. For so strange a style disconcerted and repelled the great public; and when these would not buy or praise, the Goncourts persuaded themselves and others that popular applause and its rewards were marks of mediocrity. They chose to live for their art alone and for the choice spirits who could comprehend them. Thus they became "literary mandarins," and so contributed to set a fashion that has done vast harm to recent French literature, which has become more and more estranged, to their mutual injury, from the great public, whose favorite authors, with Ohnet at their head, hardly belong to literature at all,[1] while the popularity of Zola, whom they claim for their pupil, is due more to qualities that contradict their teaching than to those that accord even with his own. It was not till late in the seventies that the success of that *enfant terrible* attracted attention to his masters, and the public began to read as literary documents what they had neglected as novels. But others also had gone with Zola to this school with equal interest and more immediate and varied results than had been produced by students of the epoch-marking rather than epoch-making "Madame Bovary." Zola and his followers will show us how this perverted Naturalism is but Romanticism in disguise.

[1] Daudet is of course an exception.

Émile Zola[1] is surely the greatest among the sombre students of the base in modern French life. Born of Venetian stock, and nursed under the warm sun of Provence, he had the hyperbolic imagination of his ancestry and youthful environment, both stimulated by a boyhood of privation that ended with a petty clerkship in the great publishing-house of Hachette, where Zola spent his scanty leisure in the hack-work of journalism, and distinguished himself by a zealous defence of the eccentric naturalistic painter, Édouard Manet. His juvenile work is interesting, for it shows that he who was to be the self-proclaimed champion of the critical theories of Taine in fiction, and the recognized head of a movement that dominated French literature for more than a decade, was not in his early novels abreast of the time. "The Mysteries of Marseilles" and the first "Contes à Ninon" suggest far more the "Wandering Jew" than they do "Madame Bovary." The first hint of later achievements is in "La Confession de Claude," which, however, pales before the terrible analysis of remorse in "Thérèse Raquin," whose best pages he has never surpassed for intensity and minute vision, while they announce also the morose and sombre pessimism of "L'Assommoir" and "Ger-

[1] Born 1840. Chronology of the more important fiction: Les Mystères de Marseilles, Le Vœu d'une morte, Contes à Ninon, 1864; Confession de Claude, 1865; Thérèse Raquin, 1867; Madeleine Férat, 1868; Les Rougon-Macquart (20 vols.), 1871–1893; Lourdes, 1894. Critical essays: Le Roman expérimental, 1880; Les Romanciers naturalistes, 1881; Nos Auteurs dramatiques, 1881; Documents littéraires, 1881; Une Campagne, 1881.

Criticism: Brunetière, Roman naturaliste, pp. 131, 297, 345; Doumic, Portraits d'écrivains; Laroumet, Nouvelles études de littérature et d'art; Pellissier, Littérature contemporaine, pp. 56, 199, and Mouvement littéraire, p. 343; Lemaître, Contemporains, i. 249, iv. 263; Sherard, Émile Zola, a biographical and critical study.

minal." His next story, "Madeleine Férat," is quite inferior to this; but it marks the beginning of that interest in the mysterious problems of heredity by which he nursed and fortified the fatalistic determinism of the "Rougon-Macquart," — the most monumental achievement of French fiction since Balzac. To these twenty volumes the critic may justly confine himself; for though Zola has not said his last word, he seems to have reached here the final stage of his literary development. His latest work shows more facility than skill in setting his sails to the psychological breeze, and the strength of "Lourdes," like that of "Germinal," is still in the epic breadth with which he handles crowds and masses.

Modern literary art, he thinks, "should be wholly experimental and materialistic," that is, scientific and realistic. He said, as early as 1868, that his purpose in the "Rougon-Macquart," that "natural and social history of a family under the Second Empire," was "to study the problems of blood and environment, the secret workings that give to the children of one father different passions and temperaments, . . . to paint a whole social era by a thousand details of men and manners, . . . to study humanity itself in its most intimate workings, . . . and to show how ten or twenty beings who at first sight seem strangers appear by scientific analysis to be closely attached to one another." Heredity, he thought, "had its laws, like gravity;" and when twenty-five years later he brought his work to a close, he makes his Doctor Pascal say of it: "It is a world, a society, a civilization. The whole of life is there. . . . Our family might suffice as example for that science whose hope is at last to fix mathematically the laws of the accidents in blood and nerve that

appear as the result of a primary organic lesion, and determine according to the environment with each individual the sentiments, desires, passions . . . whose products are called virtues and vices. And it is an historical document also. It recounts the Second Empire, from the *coup d'état* to Sedan. For our family have spread through all contemporary society, invaded all situations, borne along by overflowing appetite, that essentially modern impulse . . . that penetrates the whole social body."

This theory of fiction, amalgamated from Taine and Flaubert, is proclaimed with more vigor in Zola's critical essays than it is applied in his novels. Its weak points have been repeatedly and unsparingly laid bare; and this has tended to divert critical appreciation from the merits of his writing, which indeed lie quite elsewhere. It may be possible to import science into the novel, to make it reflect the last light of physio-psychology, as seen under the microscope of the determinist; but Zola certainly has not done it, and the more we examine these "scientific experiments carried on in the free flight of imagination," which is his own description of "Le Rêve," the more clearly we see that their power and fascination lie in what his theory would exclude, in the epic and Romantic imagination of a morose and gloomy but grand and masterful painter of the animal instincts in human nature, which seem to possess and torment his spirit like a nightmare, dragging him through foulest slums of vice and dens of crime, forcing him to fix his eyes upon the *bête humaine*, till his fancy differentiates it into grandiose, hyperbolical types of blind, materialistic forces working out the inevitable sum of human folly and misery.

It is thus that we are to understand and perhaps in

some measure to excuse the sordidness, the nastiness, the blasphemy, and the obscenity of some melancholy pages in the "Rougon-Macquart," whose nearest parallels in earlier French literature had been the wholly condemnable "Contemporains du commun" of Restif de la Bretonne. He is bent on showing what society, especially the society of the Second Empire, has made of its middle, lower, and lowest classes. That we may comprehend their moral decay, he will not veil even the crassest expression of it; and while it may be justly urged from the æsthetic side that he has marred the effect by overloading the color, — that, as the French proverb says, "he has fallen on the side to which he inclined," — yet he may rightly claim that he has served an ethical purpose, not alone by making vice most repellent, but by flashing on our moral sense vivid revelations of the mental, emotional, and æsthetic gulf that separates the summit from the base of the social pyramid, the light-house of culture from the dark sea that laps its base and may some day drown its beams in the tempest of social revolution.

But, one may fairly ask, has the social life depicted in "Nana," or in "L'Assommoir," in "La Bête humaine," or in "La Terre," any corresponding reality? Is it naturalistic? Surely these stories do not typify normal average conditions. They have about the same relation to reality that an anatomical museum has to the sculptures of the Louvre. But both have their place. Fiction will perhaps be a greater social power by showing us, not where society stands, but whither it tends; and that purpose is served by the stories of Nana, of Étienne, of Gervaise, and of Jean. It is here, and not in the success or failure of Zola's "scientific experiments," that we must seek for such ethical value as

the "Rougon-Macquart" possess, apart from artistic qualities of a nature much more rare.

By the device of a legitimate and illegitimate branch, the descendants of the mentally unsound Adelaide Fouque are spread through all the strata of the Second Empire, where, in the race of the Rougons, the democratic upheaval feeds the political ambition of one, the speculative mania of another, the scientific aspirations of a third, the restless commercial enterprise of a fourth; and the predisposition to insanity manifests itself now in a morbidly impressionable clerical celibate, now in an incarnation of mysticism that evaporates at the touch of earthly love, and now in a cataleptic victim of jealousy. Meantime the story of the children of Macquart has taken the reader into the crypts, and even sometimes into the vaults, of the social edifice. Drunkenness labors with insanity for the destruction of Gervaise, who bequeaths these tendencies, transformed now into a painter's sterile but ever travailing genius, now into the murderous mania of a locomotive engineer, now into the passionate revolt of a socialistic miner, or again into the poison-flower of vice avenging itself on the society that fostered it, — Nana, the gilded fly from the social dunghill, bearing on its wings the ferment of destruction, a contagion in the pest-stricken air of the epoch. Other Macquarts reveal to us the gross materialism of the multitude, whose god is their belly, or the sordid monotony of the lives of farmer and fisherman, relieved only by fits of gloomy bestiality, till finally chance so balances these elements of evil as to produce Jean, the prudent, hopeful, toiling peasant, to whom and to his like Zola commits the task of restoring France, poisoned by the Empire, crushed by foreign conquest and fratricidal war.

In his studies of speculation, ambition, and bourgeois life Zola sees everywhere pretence, hypocrisy, morality for external use only, glitter without, sordidness within. All his characters seem, as he makes one of them say of the children in "Pot-bouille," "sick or ill-bred." Their principles are weak, their desires imperative, their will vacillating. They reflect the confidence of the time that science had established materialism; and as a result of this they show a development of hedonistic fatalism and a weakening of those inhibitive functions by which alone the happiness of self-control is won. It may be worth noting here before we pass to the lower circles that Zola could have known nothing by observation of the carnival of luxury, the wild whirl of speculation, the Napoleonic eagle turned vulture, that he describes, for instance, in "La Curée." These chapters are, however, admirable instances of the power of trained realistic imagination, sharpened by the privations of his own youth and fed on the opera-glass notes of his friends and patrons, the Goncourts and Flaubert.[1]

The nine novels that deal with the laboring class offer a more congenial field to Zola's grand but gloomy talent; and it is this truly "apocalyptic epic" that found the first and greatest recognition, both from critics and from the public, though it may well be that the qualities for which the former read, are not always those that the latter admire.[2] Even a super-

[1] There are eleven novels in the bourgeois group with an average circulation of 64,000. Of these the most popular is "Le Rêve," the most crass, "Pot-bouille," the most artistic, "La Faute de l'abbé Mouret."

[2] Of these the average circulation has been 102,000. Criticism would doubtless give the first place to "Germinal," the second to "L'Assommoir." The public has preferred "Nana" and "La Dé-

ficial examination suffices to show that this "experimental scientist" in fiction works more by logic than by observation, more by deduction than analysis. As he says himself, he describes temperaments rather than characters, types rather than individuals, masses rather than men. And he looks at these masses, types, and temperaments as a determinist, if not as a fatalist, to whom things seem to have almost as much personality as the *bête humaine* itself. It is curious to watch this tendency as it develops in "L'Assommoir," "Germinal," and "La Débâcle." Already, in the first of these, the dram-shop, society's device for the production of sin and crime, with its panting distillery on exhibition, breathes as true and individual a life as the wretched washerwoman who gropes her way in misery and sordidness, and wrecks herself on brutality and vice. For the narrow horizon of such animal existence inevitably involves its own disappointment. The materialism of these well-fed city artisans kills in their hearts all moral purpose, all the higher interests of life. Not only is there no religion; there is no loyalty, no decency, no self-restraint, and so there can be no successful resistance to petty vices, but rather a moral stagnation that finds its only sure consolation in feasting and drunkenness. From being of the earth, earthy, it grows of the dirt, dirty, till the pseudo-respectable friends of the besotted Gervaise are ready to pay her in drink for mimicking her husband's delirium tremens, and to laugh at the exhibition, till she dies in a forgotten closet, to be discovered only by her corpse's putrefaction; while the snaky coils of the

bâcle," and buys more copies of "La Terre" than of "Germinal," though that novel is certainly the worst artistically, and the least naturalistic, of the whole series.

distillery continue to ooze their alcoholic sweat like a slow, persistent spring.

This is no photographic realism. It is Romanticism *à rebours*. Even the environment is treated romantically,[1] and the characters are not shown in their inner workings, as with Stendhal or Bourget, but in their external manifestations. They appear and reappear, changed we know not how or why, just as we might meet them from day to day in some city street. And we shall find all these elements accentuated, magnified, in "Germinal," — that grandiose epic of the strike and the mine. In place of the oozing still we have here the pumping-engine, dominating all with a soulless, relentless, panting life, vague yet real, and swallowed in the collapsing pit at last, like a monster struggling with destruction, while another force, mysterious, unseen, is the corporation, soulless, relentless, compelling these miners to their daily tasks, and itself as joyless as they. Among these colliers the individual is lost in the type even more than with the artisans of "L'Assommoir." They force themselves on the mind with a vivid, nightmare life, until their very filthiness and squalor becomes real and natural; until we feel as though in some far-off existence we ourselves had shared it, had been goaded to revolt like the sober Maheu, or felt, with Maheude, the bitter irony of a domestic life that sends mother and child to the coal-pit to keep them from starvation; until we feel that we might be even now as they are, were we condemned like them, from birth, to this cramped blackness and joyless monotony, on whose horizon there dawns no

[1] Witness that astonishing tenement stairway (L'Assommoir, pp. 64–75) leading to the attic workshop, where Lorilleux has hammered his eight thousand metres of gold chain.

ray of hope, for even they see that fierce, visionary socialism would but increase unsatisfied desires. The whole sad epic breathes "the uselessness of everything, the eternal dolor of existence." Only at the very close does Zola seem to seek a desperate consolation in the "germinal" forces of nature.

Artistically the great power of "Germinal" lies in the handling of masses of men, the procession of striking miners, or the mob howling for bread and stilled with bullets; and similar passages make "La Débâcle" one of the greatest war stories of all literature. Here are superb pictures of armies concentrating with mechanical precision around the fatal Sedan, of regiments on the march, or herded in cattle-cars or prison-pens, or surging to and fro through flaming Paris, or in the blood-stained streets of Bazeilles, or lying in furrows under fire on the plateau of Algérie, or dashing to destruction from the Calvary of Illy with the gallant chasseurs of Margueritte. Here, too, is Napoleon, whose luxurious camp train and guards reappearing at rhythmic intervals, take the place of the mining-engine and the still; and every one of the later novels has a similar object that serves as the burden of his epic narrative, brooding over all, and inspiring it with a weird life, such as Hugo drew from Notre-Dame and from the sea. In "Docteur Pascal" it is the cupboard with its mass of family documents; in "L'Argent" it is the Stock-Exchange; in "La Terre" the fecund fields of La Beauce; in "Au bonheur des dames" the great shop; in "Une Page d'amour" the vision of Paris in sunshine and storm, at dawn, at noon, at eve and midnight; and in "La Faute de l'abbé Mouret" it is the wild, luxuriant Paradou, heavy with swelling life.

This method of composition is essentially epic and

idealistic; and if Zola's style be examined, it will be found that in spite of all that he has written of "human documents," in spite of his detailed descriptions, he is a less minute realist than Balzac or even than Daudet. On the other hand, he is more florid, more picturesque; he revels in adjectives, and shows in similes and metaphors a strange, poetic vision and an essentially Romantic fancy. A single example may illustrate this. The pumping-engine of "Germinal" is about to sink into the flooded and collapsing mine. "You saw the machine," says Zola, "dislocated on its base, its limbs extended, fighting with death. It moved still, stretched its connecting-rod, its giant knee, as though to rise, then it expired, crushed, engulfed. Only the chimney, thirty metres high, remained erect, shaken like a mast in a hurricane. It seemed as though it must crumble and fly into powder, when all at once it sank in a mass, was drunk up by the earth, melted away like some colossal taper; and nothing appeared, not even the lightning-rod tip. It was ended. That wicked beast, crouched in that hollow, gorged with human flesh, heaved no more its long and heavy breath. Utterly the *Voreux* had sunk to the abyss." This is not precisely an experimental "slice of crude life." It is something much better and higher. For Zola's poetic instinct constantly corrects the vice of his theory, which it seems he has himself ceased to hold in its extreme form. For when his rouged and painted emperor, on the eve of Sedan, was called in question, he answered by claiming "the liberty of a poet to take what version suited him;" and we grant the liberty gladly, but let him remember that it is the liberty of Romantic idealism.

Zola says that he conceives the art of writing to be

"to have a vivid impression, and to render it with the greatest possible intensity." This vivid intensity he seeks to attain by exaggeration of the salient features in landscape, action, or character; and he does this often at the expense of good taste and moral conventions, and still oftener at the expense of the "human document." When dealing with scenes of low life, he is apt to deepen the impression by using himself the language of the class of whom he speaks. Thus "L'Assommoir" comprises in its descriptive passages a fairly complete repertory of artisan slang, and in the conversations he shrinks from no vulgarity that may minister to a phonographic realism, which is not necessarily a true one, since the same words convey quite different impressions to different social classes. This is, however, by no means its only fault, for if we go behind the outward form to the inner content of the speeches, it often seems as though a dread of embellishment had led him to its opposite. "Strange world," says Lemaître of "Pot-bouille," "where the porters speak like poets and the others like porters." [1] It is indeed a strange world, for it is the world of that living antinomy, a morose Romanticist.

The language in which he describes this world *en gris* is copious, flowing, often in the later novels redundant, growing more and more architectural, depending for effect more on masses than on details, with neither the polish of Flaubert, nor the mannered affectation of the Goncourts, inaccurate in the use of words, and falling sometimes into undeniable solecisms. He writes, as Pellissier says, "not only without tact, but without precision. And yet, in spite of all, this gross,

[1] Op. cit. i. 261. Cp. on Zola's conversations Brunetière, op. cit. p. 305.

heavy, ponderous style makes in the end an impression of monotonous power and brutal grandeur in intimate harmony with that reign of inexplicable blind fatality, that overhangs " this grandiose evocation of topsy-turvy idealism.

The most complete illustration of Zola's theory of fiction is not found in his own works, but in those of the five young writers who co-operated with him in "Les Soirées de Médan." Three of these indeed call for no notice here.[1] But of Huysmans[2] it is well to speak briefly, and Maupassant's genius makes a worthy close to this epoch in the evolution of fiction. The former of these has a powerful but extremely erratic talent, that he first devoted to rather nauseating studies of *collage*, treating subjects from Parisian Bohemia in the style of "L'Assommoir," but afterward uniting this crass Naturalism with something of the morose satanism of Baudelaire, and finding his art the more lovable the more its subject invited repulsion and contempt. But he seemed to take such a malicious pleasure in eliminating all grace of form or correctness of language from his pictures of ugliness, that morbid curiosity soon turned to nausea at the wearisome chaplet of vile images in which one sought in vain for any purpose, æsthetic or moral. Nature is full of decay ; but books that seem to borrow their unhealthy glow

[1] Céard and Hennique have since become more eclectic in their methods. Alexis has sunk his talent in uncleanness.

[2] Huysmans (b. 1846) is a Fleming. In the "Soirées de Médan," his "Sac au dos" surpasses all that collection in crass realism. The novels alluded to below are, "Les Sœurs Vatard," "Marthe," and "En ménage." Baudelairism begins to show itself in "À rebours" and "Là-bas," and the reaction from it in "En route."

Criticism of Huysmans in Lemaître, Contemporains, i. 311 ; Brunetière, Romanciers naturalistes, 321 sqq. ; Revue bleue, April, 1895.

from the phosphorescence of a decomposing brain are neither artistic nor natural. Even Huysmans seems to have wearied of himself, for in his last novel, "En route," he has joined those pessimists who "have grown tired of the Devil and are trying a reconciliation with God," and has given us a study of monastic dilettantism, which leads his hero to the weary conclusion that he is "too much a man of letters to be a monk, and has already too much of the monk to live with men of letters." One turns gladly from such perversions of genius to the healthy animalism of the young Maupassant.

Guy de Maupassant,[1] a nephew of Flaubert, passed his youth at Rouen, where he became a close student both of Normandy and of the literary methods of his uncle, from whom he learned the concise and pregnant style that differentiated him at his first essay from the Goncourts and from Zola, and made him in so far a truer Naturalist than either, as he was also a profounder and somewhat more sympathetic psychologist. His "Boule de suif" led all its fellows of the "Soirées de Médan" in originality and compact diction, and it struck the keynote of all his later fiction. The scene is Normandy, a region whose inhabitants have and perhaps

[1] Born 1850; died 1893. Poetry: Des vers, 1880. Fiction: Boule de suif (in Les Soirées de Médan, 1880); Une Vie, 1883; Bel-ami, 1885; Mont-Oriol, 1887; Pierre et Jean, 1888; Forte comme la mort, 1889; Notre cœur, 1890; and the posthumously published L'âme étrangère and L'Angélus. Sixteen volumes of short stories, of which the chief are: La Maison Tellier, 1881; Mlle. Fifi, 1882; M. Parent, 1886; La Horla, 1887. Drama: Musotte, 1891. Notes of travel: Clair de lune, 1883; Au soleil, 1884; Sur l'eau, 1888.

Critical essays: Doumic, Écrivains d'aujourd'hui, Brunetière, Romanciers naturalistes, p. 397 (with which it is curious to compare the views expressed in the same book, pp. 327, 334, 342); Lemaitre, Contemporains, i. 285, v. 1. The origins of several of Maupassant's most noted tales are discussed in "Revue bleue" (July, 1893) and "Journal des débats" (August 10, 1893).

deserve a repute of hard, thrifty selfishness, from which Maupassant has distilled a type of egoistic, cynical pessimism that runs through his early work, deepening gradually into nihilism and sinking at last to insanity.

Thus Maupassant offers a melancholy but fascinating study in literary psychology. We first hear of him as "in extremely good health, ruddy, and with the look of a robust country bourgeois." The friends of those years speak of him sometimes as a playful satyr, sometimes as a lusty human bull. Yet one can see that even then there was a worm at the root of the tree, which his aristocratic assumption of superiority to his literary fellows cloaked but did not hide. He said himself that "literature had never been to him anything but a means of emancipation," that he "never found any joy in working;" indeed, it might seem that his writing contributed to hasten his disease, and we can see in it how his heart loses year by year the sensuous exuberance of his youth. This lover of the senses and all that they brought him dwelt as persistently as Gautier and Baudelaire on the very mystery of death that he denied, until toward the last[1] it seemed as though he were at times hypnotized by its ghastly fascination. Body and mind suffered under the nightmare. He travelled in search of health, still more in search of distraction. But his gloom followed him even to the sun-lit Mediterranean. His notes of travel are sicklied o'er with the pale cast of a pessimism radically different from the sterile contempt of Flaubert, or Zola's morose determination to erect a Babel monument to human vice and misery. Maupassant's pessimistic pain is mortal earnest. He will live as he

[1] E. g., in La Horla. Cp. Claretie, in North American Review, August, 1892.

believes, as though life were a succession of fatalities caused by imperative desires, and ending for good with death.[1] Now, this philosophy of life offers no check to sensuality save satiety, but to a man of strong mind that check is swift and bitterly efficient. Those orgies that far into the night once roused his neighbors in their country villas at Étretat gave way to morbid speculation on the essential misery of man, and to scientific investigations with which he deliberately nursed the pessimism that was corroding his brain. So the robust animalism of "Une Vie" and of "Bel-ami" changed to the melancholy moral anatomy of "Fort comme la mort" and "Notre cœur." Already in 1887 the weird fancies of "La Horla" were a symptom of the end. "That way madness lies." Maupassant had reasoned himself into a moral pitfall from which he saw no issue. But he had approached it in his earlier tales with such calm, such clear vision, that were it not for his life's tragedy, one might be tempted to regard his work as the ironic, satiric, and cynical reduction to the absurd of literary pessimism.

To analyze the novels of Maupassant is unnecessary to our purpose, but it is worth while to note how they mark the stages of his mental devolution. The first two are narratives of lives; "Mont-Oriol" marks a transition; and the novels that follow are dramas of situation, of morbid emotion, all of them dominated by a horror of old age that grows each year more penetrating and all-pervading. Artistically, the best work is probably in "Pierre et Jean," a study of fraternal jealousy. As pictures of the morals of pessimism, "Une Vie" and "Bel-ami," though the author disclaims any moral pur-

[1] This is essentially the creed of "Sur l'eau," written when the author was thirty-eight.

pose, will not fail of a moral result that has in it the possibility of good; but "Fort comme la mort," a tale of incestuous love, is hardly profitable, and "Notre cœur" is not profitable at all.

It is difficult to convey an idea of Maupassant's style, though it is easy to cite characteristic passages, nor need they be long ones. His descriptions are always packed into the smallest space. He studies compression as Balzac and Zola do completeness. He is as easy as Flaubert is labored, as graceful as the Goncourts are artificial. But his apparent limpidity often masks a meaning that is not at once perceived. Here is an approach to Paris at evening: —

"The carriage passed the fortifications. Duroy saw before him a ruddy brightness in the sky, like the glow of a gigantic forge. He heard a confused, vast, unbroken murmur, made up of innumerable and different noises, a dull panting, now near, now distant, a vast, vague palpitation of life, the breath of Paris gasping in the spring night like a colossus worn out with fatigue." (Bel-ami, p. 273.)

In this there is something of Zola's force with the added strength of condensation. But Maupassant has also at his command a lightness of touch reached by none of the Naturalists and hardly attained even by Daudet. Listen, for instance, to this organ study:

"Sometimes the pipes cast out prolonged vast clamors, swelling like waves, so sonorous and so mighty that it seemed as though they would lift and burst the roof to spread themselves in the blue sky. Their vibrations filled all the church, and made flesh and blood tremble. Then all at once they grew calm. Delicious notes fluttered alert in the air, and touched the ear like light breaths. There were little melodies, graceful, pretty, tripping, that flitted

like birds. And suddenly the coquettish music swelled anew, became terrible in its strength and amplitude, as though a grain of sand had become a world." (Bel-ami, p. 439.)

Often a single phrase or word of Maupassant will print itself on the mind with startling vividness. Of all the sombre disciples of Taine he is beyond question the greatest master of language, the most finished stylist.

In the short story Maupassant's compact style has made him an unchallenged master. The artistic self-restraint of "Une Fille de ferme," "Monsieur Parent," "Hautôt père et fils," or "Le Baptême," is as art wholly admirable. There has been in our generation a noteworthy revival of this *genre* so much cultivated in the eighteenth century. Here we shall see Daudet win his first success; here Coppée, Halévy, Lavedan, and many others have done work of much merit; but above them all ranks Maupassant. He has published more than a hundred such tales. There are stories of Normandy, chiefly tragic, though touching at times a delightfully comic vein.[1] There are tales, perhaps too many, of Parisian foibles, of life in strange lands, of hunting, of medicine, and of love, crime, horror, misery, over all of which there plays a delicate psychological analysis, keen and often kindly. To all he brings the same careful elaboration, the conscientious effort of a man seeking in work emancipation from self. It cannot be denied, however, that his æsthetic feeling is keener than his ethical instinct. Tales like "Imprudence"[2] show the writer at his best, the author at his worst. Still it is by his stories rather than by his novels that

[1] E. g., Tribunaux rustiques, in "M. Parent," p. 189.
[2] M. Parent, p. 159.

Maupassant will hold his place in French fiction, not, indeed, on the highest peak of Parnassus, but yet "far from the limits of a vulgar fate," though in his cynicism, as in his art and in his life, he too is a champion of Naturalism pushed to that unnatural excess where it merges into perverted Idealism.

CHAPTER XIII.

MODERN FICTION.—III. THE WANING OF NATURALISM.

WHILE the theorists of the "experimental novel" were combating the idealism of the beautiful with the idealism of the base, in works of unquestionable though sometimes misdirected genius, several writers who had been born in the early years of Romanticism were developing a saner though feebler realism; and close upon them followed Daudet, born in the same year as Zola, who was the first to show to the extreme Naturalists the more excellent way of realistic sympathetic Impressionism, thus opening the path for the devolution of Naturalism and for the varied developments of the last twenty years that we associate with the names of Loti, Bourget, Barrès, Prévost, and Margueritte. For Daudet's novels, and especially those of the seventies, from "Fromont" to "Numa Roumestan," are cardinal points in the evolution of the new fiction; but before his position can be well defined it is necessary to consider briefly the secondary elements in the literary environment of his younger years.

The oldest among the men who might have influenced his development was Feuillet, whose general characteristics have already claimed attention.[1] As a novelist he first won distinction by the idealistic and somewhat sentimental "Roman d'un jeune homme pauvre," just

[1] See chap. x. p. 392.

a year after Flaubert's "Madame Bovary" had inaugurated the movement from which his own later works drew much of their power. Feuillet was the favorite novelist of the brilliant but hollow society of the Second Empire. He poses as the advocate of conventional morality and of the aristocracy of birth and feeling. But under this thin disguise he involves his gentlemen and ladies in highly romantic complications whose fundamental immorality is often far from doubtful. Yet as the accredited painter of the Faubourg St. Germain he contributed in his way and in a narrow sphere an essential element to the development of realistic fiction. No one has rendered so well as he the high-strung, neuropathic women of the upper class, who neither understand themselves nor are wholly comprehensible to others. But his earlier manner, that of the "Family Musset," yielded in "M. de Camors" to the demands of a stricter realism. Especially after the fall of the Empire had removed a powerful motive for glozing the vices of aristocratic society, he came to paint its hard and selfish cynicism as none of his contemporaries could have done,[1] though he still made himself the preacher of that fashionable Catholicity which is a sort of shibboleth of the aristocratic Adullamites under the Third Republic.[2]

A lesser and somewhat younger romancer, of more tact than talent, is Cherbuliez,[3] who treats his stories

[1] Compare, for instance, "M. de Camors," 1867, with "Julia de Trécœur," 1872, "Histoire d'une parisienne," 1881, and "Amours de Philippe," 1887.

[2] Especially in "La Morte," 1886.

[3] Born 1829. Chronology of the chief novels: Le Comte Kostia, 1863; Ladislas Blowski, 1869; Méta Holdennis, 1873; Samuel Brohl et Cie, 1877; La Bête, 1887. Besides many other novels, he has published several volumes of critical studies.

in Voltaire's manner as vehicles for philosophic dialogues to discuss questions of science or sociology with his finger on the public pulse. These discussions are often excellent, but the novels that contain them are almost always shallow in analysis, and as commonplace in sentiment as they are strained and involved in Romantic intrigue. Of more sterling merit but less popularity is Ferdinand Fabre,[1] who, like Renan, was once a seminarist, and from this vantage-ground has studied clerical life with such sincere and careful observation as to earn for himself the somewhat too flattering title, "the Balzac of the clergy;" while his delicate delineations of peasant character have hardly been equalled since George Sand. But, though his humor is more playful and his heart more sympathetic, his talent is not of the measure of the great realist, who penned the pitiless "Curé de Tours." Here, too, is a fit place to speak of André Theuriet,[2] who, though surely not a great writer, perhaps best meets the wishes of that large class who seek in literature agreeable rest and distraction rather than excitement or æsthetic gratification. He is one of the gentlest spirits that survived the bankruptcy of Romanticism. He excels in descriptions of country nooks and corners, of polite rusticity that knows nothing of the delving laborers of "La Terre," but only of graceful leisure, of solitude nursed in revery, and passion that seems the healthy springtide of germinating nature.

[1] Born 1830. Chronology of his chief novels: L'Abbé Tigraine, 1873; Barnabe, 1875; Mon oncle Benjamin, 1881; Ma vocation, 1889. Criticism: Lemaître, Contemporains, ii. 297.

[2] Born 1833. Poetry: Le Chemin du bois, 1867. Fiction: Mariage de Gérard, 1875; Deux barbeaux, 1879; Madame Heurteloup, 1882; Tante Aurélie, 1884; Péché mortel, 1885; Amour d'automne, 1888; L'Amoureuse de la préfète, 1889.

Criticism: Lemaître, Contemporains, v. 13.

Such were the more or less idealistic contemporaries of the Naturalistic leaders and the men who with them might have influenced the early steps in fiction of Alphonse Daudet, who shares with Zola the first place in modern French fiction, though, as will appear presently, they have more points of contrast than of resemblance except in their fundamental method. His literary character is more complex than Zola's, and his life has a more direct bearing on his work.

Alphonse Daudet[1] was born at Nîmes in the year of Zola's birth at Aix, so that both are natives of Provence, and joint-heirs of its warm imagination. Of his boyhood and early youth Daudet has given us an exquisite sketch in "Le Petit Chose." His father had been a well-to-do silk-manufacturer; but while Alphonse was still a child, he lost his property, and went with his family to Lyons, where the boy read and wrote much, but studied little. Poverty presently constrained him, however, to seek the wretched post of usher (*pion*) in a school at Alais, where, from his own account, his life must have been much like that of Nicholas Nickleby at Dotheboys Hall. After a year of this slavery, he left Alais in desperation, and joined his almost equally penniless brother Ernest in

[1] Born 1840. The most important helps to the study of his life and work are, first, his own "Le Petit Chose," 1868; "Souvenirs d'un homme de lettres," 1888; and "Trente ans de Paris," 1880; then Ernest Daudet, Mon frère et moi, souvenirs d'enfance et de jeunesse; Sherard, Alphonse Daudet, a Biographical and Critical Study, Doumic, Portraits d'écrivains, p. 257; Brunetière, Roman naturaliste, pp. 81 and 369; Lemaître, Contemporains, ii. 273, iv. 217; Zola, Romanciers naturalistes, p. 255 (quite faithfully echoed in Pellissier, Mouvement littéraire, p. 350); Lanson, op. cit. pp. 1056–1057. This study of Daudet has appeared with some omissions as the introduction to the author's edition of "Le Nabab," Boston: Ginn & Co.

Paris, in November, 1857. Thus far the autobiography of "Le Petit Chose." The rest of that story, published in 1868, is a not very vigorous poetic fancy; and indeed all of his work prior to the Franco-German war (1870–1871) shows idyllic grace, but lacks force.

His first years of literary life were those of an industrious Bohemian, with poetry for consolation and newspaper work for bread. Zola, who first met him in these years, describes him as "living on the outskirts of the city with other poets, a whole band of joyous Bohemians. He had the delicate, nervous beauty of an Arab horse, with flowing hair, silky, divided beard, large eyes, narrow nose, an amorous mouth, and over it all a sort of illumination, a breath of tender light that individualized the whole face, with a smile full at once of intellect and of the joy of life. There was something in him of the French street-boy and something of the Oriental woman." Above all, he was a most winning man, gaining easily patrons, friends, critics, the world, and always gracefully assuming an independence that others might have hesitated to claim.

He had secured a secretaryship with the Duc de Morny, President of the Corps Législatif, and presiding genius of the Empire, and had won recognition for his short stories in "Le Figaro," when in 1859 failing health compelled him to go to Algeria, which he frequently visited, as well as Corsica, in later and more prosperous years. Besides the obvious traces of these visits in "Le Nabab," and in many short stories, they gave him, in general, a power of exotic description not common in France, and strengthened his Provençal imagination, while revealing to him its dangers. But whatever he might owe to the fortunate necessity of

this journey, he owed much more to his marriage soon after his return to a lady whose literary talent comprehended, supplemented, and aided his own. He had lingered in literary Bohemia long enough to know its charm; he left it before he had suffered from its dangers.

Though for five years in the civil service, he was always rather an observer than a politician, and never lost sight of his profession, to which he dedicated himself entirely after Morny's death (1865). He now turned for a time from fiction to the drama, for he had definitely abandoned poetry, and it was not till after the war of 1870 that he became fully conscious of his vocation as a novelist, perhaps through the trials of the siege of Paris and the humiliation of his country, which deepened his nature without souring it.[1]

The years that immediately followed the war were still occupied with short stories and the genial satire of "Tartarin de Tarascon," but in 1874 "Fromont jeune et Risler aîné" showed that he was justified in a higher ambition; for while he has since published several collections of short stories, it is the great series of his Parisian dramas, profound studies of life from life, on which his enduring fame will rest, though the choice, distilled irony of "Tartarin sur les Alpes" (1886) and "Port-Tarascon" (1890) would keep him in lasting remembrance.[2]

[1] Daudet's dramas are La Dernière idole, 1862; Les Absents, 1864; L'Œillet blanc, 1865; Le Frère aîné, 1867; Le Sacrifice, 1869; L'Arlésienne, 1872 (thought by Zola to be his best); Lise Tavernier, 1872; Le Char, 1878; L'Obstacle, 1890. He has assisted also in dramatizing most of his novels, but has achieved no great theatrical success.

[2] Besides novels, Daudet has published, since 1874, "Contes choisis," 1879, "Les Cigognes," 1883, "La Belle Nivernaise," 1886, etc., and the two volumes of literary and autobiographical fragments already cited on p. 467.

The story of Daudet's life is the story of his books, and to trace the development of his genius it is necessary to consider his fiction in its chronological order; for while a well-defined individuality runs through it all, some qualities will be found to recede, while others grow in prominence, with his maturing genius. The "charm" which almost every critic has attributed to his work is most strongly marked in his first book, the poetry of "Les Amoureuses," with its accompanying "Fantaisies" (1857–1861). Both show in its greatest potentiality the idyllic spirit that can be traced in nearly all his later work. These verses to Clairette and Célimène, to robins and bluebirds, and especially the triolets of "Les Prunes," and the fairy fancies in prose, "Âmes du paradis," "Papillon et bête à bon Dieu," and "Chaperon rouge," are just the songs and the tales that *Le Petit Chose* would naturally write or dream in his Robinson's Island at Nîmes, in his truant wanderings at Lyons, or for his *Petits*, the primary class at Alais, and even in those first Paris days before the world came to be "too much with him." All this work is valuable to the critic because it explains how later books of a far higher order than this came to have a romantic, lyric, pathetic, and optimistic element, which by its contrast with the realistic, tragic, satiric, and pessimistic foundation of his novels gives them, not greater strength, but greater fascination and charm.

The effect of Paris on the impressionable youth was to set him in search of new modes of literary expression. He essayed, as we have seen, the drama, and in the "Lettres de mon moulin" made a considerable advance toward the position he was to occupy later. These stories, published in 1869, had been begun three

years before in "L'Événement," a Parisian journal. The prevailing tone was still romantic and fanciful,[1] but there are several stories that in their pathetic humor and delicate observation strike a more realistic key, and show the follower of Balzac, the student of the "Comédie humaine."[2] In grotesque exaggeration "La Diligence de Beaucaire" anticipated "Tartarin," Corsican and Algerian life were realistically studied in several stories, "En Carmargue" showed unsuspected powers of sympathetic description of nature, and in "Nostalgies de la caserne" we have the first hint of that psychological analysis that becomes the dominant note in his most recent work. Progress, nowhere startling, was marked in many directions. The "Letters" were full of promises soon to be fulfilled.

For eight years after the publication of the first "Lettres de mon moulin," Daudet was known as the greatest master of the short story in France. His work showed growing power as it struck deeper roots in the observation of life. In his four volumes of stories from these years[3] there are a few pieces still that recall the earlier manner,[4] but one is most struck by the glowing patriotism, the growth of the urban element, and the development of pathetic social satire, stronger, fuller, yet identical in spirit with that of

[1] E. g., La Chèvre de M. Seguin, La Mule du pape, L'Élixir du Père Gaucher, Le Curé de Cucugnan, Les Étoiles, Ballades en prose.

[2] Le Portefeuille de Bixiou, Les Deux auberges, L'Arlésienne.

[3] Contes du lundi, 1873; Contes et récits, 1873; Robert Helmont, Études et paysages, 1874; Femmes d'artistes, 1874. The "Lettres à un absent," 1871, is no longer in print. A book for children, "Les Petits Robinsons des caves," belongs also to this period.

[4] Un Réveillon dans le marais, La Soupe au fromage, Les Fées de France.

"Les Deux auberges" of the antebellum period,[1] and, at times sinking to a more tragic key, as in "Arthur," the story of a drinking workman, whom it is instructive to compare with the Coupeau of "L'Assommoir," or in "La Bataille du Père-Lachaise," a Communistic orgy in the tombs on the eve of defeat and execution.

These delicate cameos in words, which, as a French critic says, are "extremely simple, but never banal, and often singular and rare," show everywhere the influence of the Franco-German war. This bitter experience taught him the deep pathos of "Le Siège de Berlin" and "La Dernière classe," the noble and true poetry of "Le Porte-drapeau" and "Les Mères;" it inspired the playful fancy of "Les Pâtés de M. Bonnicar," the exuberant satire of "La Défense de Tarascon," and the bitter realism of "Le Bac." We find already studies for his Jack, for the Nabab, and for Mora. His humor has grown keener, his satire sharper, his knowledge of the darker side of life is vastly more minute, and yet his wide sympathy has suffered no loss. He has proved his armor at every part, and his first venture in the higher field of the realistic novel, "Fromont jeune et Risler aîné" (1874), shows already the hand of the master.

Hence the short stories printed since 1874 may be briefly dismissed. They exhibit sustained but not advancing power.[2] For that we must look to the profound social studies of his "Parisian Dramas," and to

[1] E. g., Père Achille, Un Teneur de livres, Le Turco de la commune, Un Décoré du 15 août, La Bohème en famille, Le Ménage de chanteurs. Psychological analysis is represented by "Maison à vendre" and "Le Bac."

[2] "Contes choisis" (1879) are reprinted from earlier publications. "La Belle Nivernaise" (1886) is an exquisite idyl of boy life. "Les *Cigognes*" (1883) is juvenile.

the humorous Tarasconades of his Tartarin.[1] These last demand and deserve a fuller notice.

Tarascon is a city on the Rhône near Avignon and not far from Nîmes, the birthplace of Daudet. In his hands it becomes a type of that South of France which plays so large a part in every department of his work. None has caught as he, with such delicately keen perception and such sympathy, that exuberant character that beneath the sun of Provence sees all in a mirage and lives in an unreal world, a self-created environment, and yet charms in spite of its persistent self-deception. He has himself described it in his "Numa" as "pompous, classical, theatrical; loving parade, costume, the platform, banners, flags, trumpets; clannish, traditional, caressing, feline, with an eloquence brilliant, excited, and yet colorless; quick to anger, but with a little pretence in its expression, even when the anger is sincere." Such is the *Midi*, such are the Nabab and Numa, and many others in their different kinds, and such is Tartarin, the immortal type of them all.

He is first introduced to us as the hero of hunting-

[1] The novels in chronological order are: Fromont jeune et Risler aîné, 1874; Jack, 1876; Le Nabab, 1878; Rois en exil, 1879; Numa Roumestan, 1880; L'Évangéliste, 1883; Sapho, 1884; L'Immortel, 1888; Rose et Ninette, 1891; La Petite paroisse, 1895; Le Soutien de familles, 1895. The humorous satires are: "Tartarin de Tarascon," 1872; "Tartarin sur les Alpes," 1886; "Port-Tarascon," 1890. "Entre les frises et la rampe" 1894, is a collection of theatrical studies.

Some idea of the relative popularity of these books may be gained from their sale. This, according to the latest figures available to me, has been as follows: Tartarin sur les Alpes, 188,000; Sapho, 166,000; Tartarin de Tarascon, 120,000; Le Nabab, 97,000; Fromont jeune et Risler aîné, 95,000; L'Immortel, 94,000; Numa Roumestan, 77,000; Jack, 71,000; L'Évangéliste, 42,000; Les Rois en exil, 22,000. "Trente ans de Paris" has had a sale of 44,000. The other volumes of souvenirs and stories average about 30,000.

parties who, for the lack of game, shoot at caps that they toss in the air. A caged lion fires his imagination, and insensibly his assumption of superior courage forces Tartarin-Quixote, much against the will of his other self, Tartarin-Sancho, to go to Algeria to hunt the lions that have long ceased to exist there. He returns, however, with a melancholy camel, almost persuaded that he has really done feats of heroism while enjoying an Oriental *dolce far niente*, and he seems to have earned for the rest of his life the privilege of dazzling the imagination of his worthy fellow-citizens when this story ends. The whole is one long piece of delicious persiflage by a Provençal of his brother Provençals, often perilously grazing the burlesque, but always saved from buffoonery by an unfailing tact that makes the reader feel that it is the comic side of truth, and not a caricature.

Fourteen years later came "Tartarin sur les Alpes," the masterpiece of French humor in this century. Here Tartarin-Quixote has once more involved his brother Sancho in trouble, and to support his dignity as President of the Alpine Club, whose excursions are limited to the pleasant hill-sides of the Alpilles, he undertakes a trip to Switzerland with all the paraphernalia of an expert climber. The incongruity of the dangers conjured up by his Southern imagination with the prosaic tourist life that surrounds him forms the basis of the narrative, which introduces its protagonist with ice-pick, climbing-irons, snow-glasses, rope, and alpenstock, into the palatial hotel on the summit of the Rigi, where there is an elevator and a *table d'hôte* with six hundred guests. But the good-humored satire is by no means confined to Tartarin. It takes in all manner of Alpine tourists, from the English miss and the

Russian Nihilistic maiden to the shady spirits of the Jockey Club, and culminates in a colossal fancy of his fellow Tarasconian, Bompard, the Swiss Exploitation Trust, which, according to him, keeps the country in order for visitors, and maintains crevasses so as to offer a pretence of danger. All of which Tartarin devoutly believes, and becomes as nonchalant in real peril as he was excited while hunting the tame chamois that was fed in the hotel kitchen and taught to exhibit itself on a cliff to attract strangers. At the close each Tarasconian thinks he has sacrificed the life of the other to his own safety by cutting the cord that united them, while both are safe and sound. Tartarin returns to Tarascon as Bompard is telling of his comrade's fate. The Alpine Club is a little dazed, but not so very much surprised, for Provençals understand one another.

"Port-Tarascon," a story of colonization, is inferior to the Alpine Tartarin, though it is a delightful piece of work and has been well translated by Henry James. But Daudet must have felt that he had worked that vein out, for in this book he has brought Tartarin's life to a worthy close. It is interesting to study this side of Daudet's talent, where the poetic and romantic imagination of the "Amoureuses" and the "Fantaisies" finds a free scope still, while in the work that remains for us to consider we shall see it gradually subordinated to a realism more complete perhaps than that of any contemporary novelist.

For in the "Parisian Dramas" Daudet is a most anxious student of real life; and it is this truthfulness, this observation, in which all his novels strike their roots, that is the key to his strength. He departs from it at times, as will appear, but never without a

conscious purpose, though never, perhaps, without loss.[1] So when he is maturing his first novel, he studies its environment on the spot, takes lodgings among the factories, and lets this new life work upon him and for him. "Fromont jeune et Risler aîné" is a study of an honest and talented man whose efforts raise him socially into a society against the corruption of which he has no defence and from which he escapes only by suicide. In working his way from the shop to the counting-room and from poverty to wealth, Risler has not acquired the social wisdom that might have guarded him from marriage with Sidonie, the fascinating but unscrupulous, ambitious, worldly, and revengeful Parisian of the struggling middle class. This evil genius is contrasted with the domestic simplicity of Désirée Dolabelle and her mother, who adore the unappreciated talent of the decayed actor, her father, perhaps the most genially conceived character in the novel, with many suggestions of the happiest creations of Dickens, one of those *ratés* who furnish the mark for the keenest shafts of irony in "Jack." Sidonie deceives her husband, degrades his brother, shatters Fromont's conjugal peace, and finds a congenial place at last on a dance-hall stage. The closing words of the book suggest that Daudet regards her as the natural product of her environment.

"Jack," Daudet's next and longest novel, is called by its author "a work of pity, anger, and irony." This narrative of a whole storm-tossed existence shows greater breadth of conception and description, and also a greater sadness of tone; for the tragedy, while less

[1] The episode of the Joyeuse family in "Le Nabab" is an instance, though even this has a kernel of truth. See Trente ans de Paris, p. 34.

general, is more minute and harrowing. Paris is again the centre of the story, though its course takes the reader to Nantes, to the shipyards of Indret, and into the stoking-room of an ocean steamer. The central figure is an illegitimate child, petted and neglected at home, but never governed, and forced at last into a struggle for existence, for which he has been studiously unfitted, to be crushed by the thoughtlessness of his mother and the mean spirit of D'Argenton, the poet, who, with his attendant group of *ratés*, the failures of literature and art, forms a sort of mutual admiration club envious only of recognized talent. In bringing Jack face to face with the sombre realities of a day-laborer's life, Daudet was first among the Naturalists to make an honest study of the condition of the great artisan class. This is at once the most novel and the most effective part of the book. The stoking-room, the wedding-feast at Saint-Mandé, the forge at Indret, are the scenes that cling longest to the memory, while the more romantically conceived friends of Jack, the humble Dr. Rivals, the ironworker Roudic, and the *camelot* Bélisaire, grow dim beside the good-humored thoughtlessness of the mother, who spoils, neglects, betrays, and ruins the son she thinks she loves.

"Le Nabab," two years later, shows a greater advance in epic and tragic power over "Jack" than "Jack" had done over "Fromont." Indeed, in its combination of the pathetic and idyllic with playful humor and indignant satire, this is perhaps the most characteristic of all Daudet's novels. It owes no small part of its strength to the skill with which the author has turned to account the observations of his years as secretary to the Duc de Morny, whom he has presented here as Mora, with other well-known figures in that

strange social scum on the caldron of the Second Empire. Throughout, he has been faithful to the spirit of history if not to its letter. He tells us himself in his preface that the Nabab recalls "a singular episode of cosmopolitan Paris fifteen years ago," and he refers us to the "Moniteur officiel" of February, 1864, for a close parallel to the contest for the Nabab's Corsican seat, the chief difference being, though Daudet does not say so, that the true Nabab got his money in Egypt, in ways even more devious than those of Jansoulet, and that he got himself elected three times by lavish use of money for the district of Gard, only to find his election thrice annulled as a useless and inopportune scandal. The true Nabab lived for some years in poverty and contempt, and died after the fall of the Empire, — a dénouement that Zola finds more tragic than that of the novel, though Daudet might reply that it is less dramatic.

In Mora the Duc de Morny is drawn by his private secretary with a kindly hand that hardly does justice to his cynical selfishness. "I have painted him," says the author, "as he loved to show himself in his Richelieu-Brummel attitude. . . . I have exhibited . . . the man of the world that he was and wished to be; assured, too, that while he was alive he would not have been displeased to be presented thus." And just as Mora is in the very letters of the name but a thin disguise for Morny, so Bois-Landry and Monpavon are but slightly altered names of men well known to the Paris of their time; and critics claim to recognize the originals of Moëssard, of Le Merquier, and of Hemerlingue. Félicia Ruys was said by some to be studied from Sarah Bernhardt, though others as positively deny the resemblance; all agree that Cardailhac

is the theatrical manager Roqueplan. In manner Jenkins is Dr. Olliffe, but the famous arsenic pills belong to another physician, and the "Bethlehem" is taken almost literally from a report on "La Pouponnière," an institution founded by equally philanthropic men with similar intentions and like results.

In this essentially Parisian drama Daudet has drawn on his imagination almost solely for Madame Jenkins and her son André, for De Géry, for Passajon, and for the Famille Joyeuse. Zola says that Daudet told him he thought this a wise concession to popular taste, and seemed to imply that it was contrary to his own judgment, as it was to his critic's. The grotesque may be appropriately mingled with the tragic, but sentimental pathos of the "Tiny Tim" type, however skilfully done, does not deepen the impressive dignity of such scenes as the death and funeral of Mora, the stern satire of Jansoulet's end, or the broad, epic strokes of "Les Fêtes du bey." Daudet continued to use similar contrasts in later novels, but they are less prominent and less sharp as the writer grows surer of his naturalism.

His next novel, however, "Les Rois en exil," was of necessity less a product of personal observation than of popular report and of constructive imagination. Hence, from our study of Daudet's methods, it will cause no surprise to find him saying in his "Souvenirs": "This is one of my books that gave me most trouble to set up, that I carried longest with me, kept in my head as a title and dim design as it appeared to me one evening on the Place du Carrousel through the tragic rent in the Parisian sky made by the ruins of the Tuileries." He wished, he says, to write the drama of princes self-exiled to the gay capital after

their governmental bankruptcy, a book of modern history torn from the vitals of life, not excavated from the dust of archives. Many such rulers there were in the Paris of that day, from the notorious Isabella of Spain to the dignified and melancholy king of Hanover and the unsavory Francis II. of Naples, whose heroic German wife seems to have furnished more than one trait for the noble Queen Frédérique of the novel. The tragic beauty of this character, the greatest charm of the book, shows a more creative and clairvoyant vision than had appeared in any of his previous stories. Other characters were studied more directly from life; for instance, Méraut, the too ardent legitimist, and that delightful exploiter of high life, Tom Lévis; but all of Daudet's exuberant imagination was needed to do justice to the reality of this product of the mad years of the closing Empire. Yet perhaps the most remarkable element in the book is its sympathetic charm, so great that it won praise alike from royalist and republican.

But while, as a study of political psychology, the "Kings in Exile" has great merits, it marks no advance over "Le Nabab" as a work of fiction. It bears constant witness to the slow and reluctant process of its production. The characters, especially Méraut and Frédérique, may be more subtly drawn; it is, indeed, just in this direction that Daudet will still make the greatest progress; but yet we feel that we are moving in a realm of thought and interests foreign alike to him and to us, and, while the dignified pathos that befits the tale of the collapse of an ancient social order is not wanting, there are no scenes of such broad sweep and vivid color as were found in "Le Nabab," and reappeared in all their brilliancy in "*Numa* Roumestan."

For while "Numa" is a Parisian drama, the author has turned for his inspiration to the sun of his native Provence, fusing for us the spirit of "Fromont" and of "Tartarin." Numa, the statesman whose Southern imagination finds it so easy to promise and so hard to keep, is so true to nature that every prominent politician of the South of France seems to have seen some of his features in it, though few had the magnanimity of Gambetta to laugh at the thought of intentional portraiture. A more individualized study of the same race is the tambourinist Valmajour. He, as Daudet confesses, had his living parallel; the rest were "bundles of diverse sticks," a phrase which he borrowed from Montaigne. The author tells us that he regards "Numa" as "the least incomplete of all his works," and in its structure and plot it is certainly more closely knit than the "Nabab," with its series of brilliant but disconnected scenes. He says, also, that it is the book into which he has put most invention, and contrasts it with the labored production of "Kings in Exile."

It is probable that we should understand this, not as though he had been here more independent of those little note-books to which he often refers in his "Souvenirs," but rather that in "Numa" these observations seemed to him more completely and successfully fluxed in his mind. As a result of this, the story becomes more consecutive, more closely articulated, less a series of episodes, than the "Nabab," or the "Kings in Exile." There is here less breadth of narration, but an equal humor and a profounder analysis of character, while the tragic notes, if less deep, are more sustained. For the whole warp and woof of the book is a tragedy of effervescent optimistic imagi-

nation in its jostling with the realities of life. This generous emotion distorts the judgment of Numa, whose facile promises and light-hearted thoughtlessness destroy the happiness of one existence after another, while his own buoyancy shields him in great measure from the troubles he causes, — a result that is quite true to nature. It is the same mental mirage that he had already studied from the comic side in "Tartarin" that appears here in its tragic aspects, while in the love of the consumptive Hortense the same psychologic condition is exhibited in its idyllic possibilities; in the tambourinist Valmajour it is tragi-comic, and wholly comic in Bompard, a figure borrowed from "Tartarin." Opposed to all these in character is Rosalie, Numa's wife, who has enough Parisian clairvoyance to see the world as it is, but is not the happier for the vision. Nowhere had Daudet's satire been so delicate or so pitiless as in this book, which marks the beginning of the third phase of his genius, and in its peculiar excellence is not yet surpassed.

"L'Évangéliste" continues the closer method of composition, and like all the later novels it is shorter than "Fromont," "Jack," or the "Nabab." Its author calls it an "observation" and a *roman* in distinction from earlier *drames*, for it is more a psychological study than a novel of action, though its movement is most rapid and vigorous, and the whole seems written under the pressure of some personal emotion, realizing that rare combination "intensity of feeling and sage simplicity of execution." The morbid pathology of religious enthusiasm and ambition for spiritual dominion is exhibited in Madame Autheman and Mademoiselle de Beuil; its stern self-sacrifice and rooting out

of human affections for what it calls the love of God is shown in the pitiful story of Éline Ebsen; while as a foil to these Protestants the devout Catholic Henriette serves to illustrate the weakening of character that may arise from too great spiritual dependence. To positive, relentless, logical force of character the weaker and simpler natures yield, or are crushed. Never has Daudet been so pessimistic as here. All who win our sympathy end by claiming our pity. Madame Autheman drives her husband to suicide by her coldness; she breaks the heart of Éline's mother and of her betrothed by nursing the young girl's religious fervor into monomania; she wrecks the fortunes of the good pastor Aussandon and the humble domestic joys of Romain and Silvanine, who cross her path. The humor of the tale is wholly saturnine, the touch is light; but the pen-point is sharp, its caustic mordant falls drop by drop on cant and hypocrisy, and exposes them by excoriation.

"L'Évangéliste" was followed by "Sapho," the most widely circulated of Daudet's novels, partly because of its literary strength, partly because its subject interested a wider audience. Dedicating his novel "To my sons when they are twenty," he proposed to show in it the dangers to heart, mind, character, and worldly success that spring from *collage*, that attempt at domestic life outside of legitimate marriage. This particular social ulcer seems a grave peril in France, but in our Anglo-Saxon race it has never been a serious menace, and so to us this story has less interest and value, in spite of its minute psycho-physiology, its serious purpose, and occasional passages of great strength, which are unrelieved here, as in "L'Évangéliste" by lighter touches. But that this was due only

to a self-imposed restraint, and that Daudet had lost none of his humorous power, was attested two years after "Sapho" in "Tartarin sur les Alpes."

"L'Immortel" offers a more varied picture. Primarily it is a satire on myopic scholarship and the French Academy, a satire so obviously and inexplicably unjust that it blinds the reader at first to the real value of a work which none but Daudet could have written. The lightness of humor that seemed excluded by design from "Numa," "Sapho," and "L'Évangéliste," plays all through "L'Immortel" with lambent flames, making the whole a veritable "literary Leyden-jar." That episode at De Rosen's tomb, with its inscription, "Love is stronger than death," has a *vis comica* that makes it one of the best presentations in literature of a situation as old as civilization, and so true to human nature that we may trace it from China to mediæval England. Here the widow in her weeds, like a nineteenth-century "Matron of Ephesus," receives the first caress of her new lover, who by a sudden inspiration, that is one of Daudet's happiest hits, has transferred his facile affections to her from her rival at the moment when both her disappointed ambition and his own are in need of consolation. There is an epic breadth, too, in the trial of Fage that had not been equalled since "Le Nabab." Yet on the whole the book is unsatisfactory. Not only is the object of attack unwisely chosen, the attack itself has not sufficient appearance of justice to carry our sympathy in spite of its partial foundation in fact. It seems hardly credible that the gullible Astier-Réhu should be of the Academy. In any case he is not typical of it. The intrigues of his wife are probable enough, but her contemptuous discarding of Astier at the close is at least

as inexplicable as it is cruel. Far more interesting are the secondary characters, Astier's son Paul, the "social struggler," the unscrupulous believer in the survival of the smartest, Freydet, the aristocratic aspirant for academic recognition, and the bookbinder Fage, the evil genius of the book, who, like Tom Lévis, recalls the exaggerated manner of Dickens. Interesting, too, is the introduction into the story of the author himself under the mask of Védrine, and the thin disguise of his friend Zola as Dalzon.

"L'Immortel" was followed by "Port-Tarascon," and this by "Rose et Ninette" (1891), a slighter study than its predecessors, but yet an analysis as careful and as earnest as any of them, of the effects of the new divorce laws that are connected with the name of Senator Naquet (1886), both on the separated parties and on their children who may be old enough to feel the changed and strained relations.

Finally, in "La Petite paroisse" (1895), Daudet has devoted his talent to a study of jealousy in its various shades, from the voluble rage of Rosine and the tardy retrospective prudence of the old forester, Sautecœur, to the paralytic Duke of Alcantara, who sees with impotent bitterness the conquest that he had begun achieved by his son, the precocious *blagueur* Charley, Prince of Olmütz, while the whole study of jealousy culminates in the central figure, Richard, strong in body, weak in will, betrayed because despised.

Two features — the one stylistic, the other ethical — are noteworthy in Daudet's latest work. Here first he has adopted the symbolic method that Zola and Ibsen also use with such effect. The rhythmic recurrence of the little church marks every stage in the development of the theme over which it seems to preside

But still more significant is the recognition of the evangelical ethics of the Russian school as a present moral force in French society, before which the stern pessimism of the older Naturalists, with its retributive justice, deliquesces into sentimental pity and weak pardon, — another phase of the anæmia of the will, a sort of moral anæsthetic with which our *fin de siècle* is toying. Daudet, indeed, treats this spirit with delicate irony; but yet he yields to it somewhat, and so the psychic analysis, both in the case of Richard and of his wife, Lydie, becomes much looser than is usual in the better work of this author.

The general characteristics of Daudet's earlier manner are grace, charm, and pathos, all qualities that seem to belong to that sunny South of France which he has satirized so playfully in "Tartarin," so kindly in "Le Nabab," so sternly in "Numa Roumestan." To these elements he added, in growing measure after 1871, a minute, careful observation, which gave him a keener insight into social wrongs, and changed his playful humor to bitter satire. But to this naturalistic temper he brought the mind of an idyllic poet, and it is this that differentiates him from Zola and his school, as well as from their predecessors, Stendhal and Balzac, and gives him many points of nervous contact with Dickens, so that his mind "gallops in the midst of the real, and now and again makes sudden leaps into the realm of fancy;" for, as Zola says, "nature has placed him where poetry ends, and reality begins." This poet's vision gives to much of Daudet's work the appearance of a kindly optimism that prefers, even in evil, to see the ridiculous rather than the base, though in his later work he has separated these elements, and has been either

frankly humorous or profoundly earnest. But a permanent result of his temperament has been that his satire still keeps much of the irony that originally characterized it almost altogether. This irony is the hardest to seize, the most evanescent of all literary forms, but it is one of the most charming of all; and, in one with as keen a sense of humor as Daudet, one of the most effective. It betrays its possessor, however, into a greater subjectivity, more expression of personal sympathy for his characters, than is consistent with the canons of strict naturalism. This is especially noticeable in "Fromont" and "Jack," but Numa and Astier win his sympathy at the last, and his Nabab has it from the first in spite of all his faults and foibles. Yet his subjectivity is more veiled than that of Dickens, and often suggests the more delicate processes of Thackeray.

The poetic element, as has been shown, was most prominent in the earlier work, and it is in this that we find the greatest care for form. An analysis of even the slighter sketches will reveal conscientious elaboration in structure and phraseology, though the artist in him preserved his work from the extreme meticulousness of Flaubert. But when we come to the longer novels, we shall find this care more manifested in the working up of single episodes than in the structure of the whole. He has not the architectural power of Zola, but rather the style of an impressionist painter. In many ways he suggests a comparison with Millet. For just as such a painter might be willing to sacrifice photographic realism to effect, so the word-painter allows himself liberties with the dictionary and a picturesque freedom in the use of tenses, though more sparingly in the novels that follow "Numa Roumes-

tan," and these artifices produce delicate shades of impression, the causes of which quite escape the ordinary reader.[1]

All that can be observed — the individual picture, scene, character — Daudet will render with wonderful accuracy, and the later novels show an increasing firmness of touch, limpidity of style,[2] and wise simplicity in the use of the sources of pathetic emotion, such as befits the cautious Naturalist. But the transitions from episode to episode or from scene to scene are in the earlier novels often strangely abrupt, suggesting the manner of the Goncourts. It seems at times as though Daudet were in haste to pass over the treacherous quicksand of fancy to the sure ground of the human document. As a rule one of these novels is a series of carefully elaborated chapters; but the reader must make for himself the leap from one to another, must be prepared for abrupt changes of scene and time, and even for developments in character of which the text will afford only a hint or passing allusion. It is not easy, for instance, to account for the acts or thoughts of Countess Padovani in "L'Immortel," nor for those of Félicia in "Le Nabab," without summoning imagination to supplement the material given us; not indeed that their conduct seems inexplicable or improbable, but only that the author asks the cooperation of his readers. Then, too, especially in the earlier novels the action is interrupted by the intrusion

[1] Brunetière, l. c. pp. 90, 94, 108, illustrates and develops these ideas with much ingenuity. Of course the word "impressionist" is not used here in its narrower technical sense.

[2] Such a sentence as that beginning "Oh! vers trois heures," and stretching over more than a page of "Le Nabab" (pp. 215–217) to end in an anacoluthon, would be sought in vain in any novel after "L'Évangéliste."

of episodes interesting in themselves, but unduly elaborated in view of the general plan.

It is not clear how much of this lack of close articulation is due to the method of composition. Daudet tells us that he sketches out his first drafts at white heat, living his scenes, and of course laying stress on the high lights in his canvas. Then, when once the characters are all alive in his mind, he sets them to work, "he gives us what has made his heart beat and his nerves throb, and his personages are dramatic and picturesque because they have lived in his mind."[1] These are not novels with a purpose, starting from some preconceived conception; they are the result of that "multitude of little note-books," always with him and always accumulating new material. Around a central figure others group themselves; the notes become a book. "After nature," he said, "I never had any other method." And that he may attain this the more fully, he denies himself a too careful revision of the general scheme of his work, hastening to commit the early chapters to print lest the whole should lose through elaboration its passion, sympathy, and straightforward natural diction.[2] Over details, however, he works slowly; and he has told Mr. Sherard that he "writes each manuscript three times over, and would write it as many times more if he could."

These native qualities combined with this method have at last produced a style that attains the highest effects of art without artificiality, and is at once classical and modern. In this, as in much else, Daudet forms an instructive contrast to Zola, his greatest con-

[1] Trente ans de Paris, p. 280. Cp. also Pellissier, p. 351, who seems to have borrowed from Zola.

[2] Trente ans de Paris, p. 283.

temporary in French fiction, "of the same school but not of the same family." Zola is methodical, Daudet spontaneous. Zola works with documents, Daudet from the living model. Zola is objective, Daudet with equal scope and fearlessness shows more personal feeling and hence more delicacy. And in style also, Zola is vast, architectural; Daudet slight, rapid, subtle, lively, suggestive. Both have in them elements of the poet and idealist; but Zola is essentially epic, Daudet more idyllic. And, finally, in their philosophy of life, Zola inspires a hate of vice and wrong, Daudet wins a love for what is good and true. Zola's pessimism may be a tonic for strong minds, Daudet's is less likely to be misunderstood,[1] while in them both there is a noble earnestness that we miss in the later Naturalists or the decadent Psychologists, in Maupassant and Prévost, and in all but the latest work of Bourget and Margueritte.

The genius of Daudet and Zola compels popular recognition as well as critical consideration. The only living French novelist whose books have a circulation approaching theirs is George Ohnet, a writer whose popularity is more interesting than his stories because it explains, though it does not excuse, the contempt of the Goncourts for the favor of the great public, and also because it shows how the crassest form of Ro-

[1] The optimistic note of the earlier work has been so far dominated by the pessimistic, especially since "Le Nabab," that Pellissier's classification of Daudet as an optimist, though seconded by Lemaître, seems hardly justified. It is, of course, true that pathos implies optimism; but this is precisely the element that has been most subordinated in the work of the third period, except "La Petite paroisse," which seems to inaugurate a fourth manner. With the above parallel between Daudet and Zola may be compared Pellissier, p. 349, to whom I owe several suggestions.

manticism still ferments beneath the varnish of Naturalism in what passes for mind among the great masses of reading Philistia. Of him it is sufficient to remember, first, that he is popular, then that each phrase of the following appreciation of his talent by Jules Lemaître is so true that I know not how to better his instruction. "You find in him," says this genial critic, "the elegance of the chromo, the nobility of clock-bronzes, the posing of a strolling actor, smirking optimism, Romantic sentimentality, high-breeding as the *concierge's* daughters conceive it, aristocracy as Emma Bovary imagines it, elegant style as M. Homais comprehends it. It is Feuillet without grace or delicacy, Cherbuliez without wit or philosophy, Theuriet without poetry or frankness, the triple essence of banality."[1]

But while Ohnet is imposing himself on the philistine masses, like Bottom on his fellow artisans, the frivolity of the aristocracy has found a voice in the short stories of Lavedan, inferior to Maupassant's in stylistic beauty and self-restraint, but equal to those masterpieces in delicate irony, and superior perhaps in wit, which is a somewhat rare quality in contemporary France, and will be so long as the negative influences of Renan's aristocratic pessimism prevail over the old sane and sound *esprit gaulois*. Nor should we be wholly silent concerning that other sparkling mirror of aristocratic frivolity, Gyp,[2] a great-grand-niece of the

[1] Lemaître, Contemporains, i. 354. Ohnet was born 1848. Chronology of his chief novels: Serge Panine, 1881; Le Maître des forges, 1882; La Comtesse Sarah, 1883; Lise Fleuron, 1884; La Grande Marnière, 1885; Volonté, 1888; Docteur Rameau, 1889.

[2] Born, as Vapereau discreetly notes, "*vers* 1850." Characteristic volumes are: Petit Bob, 1882; Autour du mariage, 1883; Mlle. Loulou, 1888.

Revolutionary orator Mirabeau. Her books, like the society in which she moves, are full of *blague*, light-hearted insouciance, and an irony always barbed and stinging and often malicious as well. Hers is a wit without reverence, a talent without sincerity, artistic or ethical. Thus she unites the charm and the poison of that exquisite *fin de siècle* whose luxury is ever merging in a corruption that has recently found a prophetic denunciator in De Vogüé, the translator of Tolstoi, with his earnest and growing "Neo-Christian" school.

But we are lingering among the foot-hills of Parnassus. Loti will lead us back to serener heights. This lieutenant of marine,[1] who since 1880 has charmed a cultured public with exotic sketches and in 1891 succeeded Feuillet in the French Academy, brought to strange horizons an exquisite power of observation that gives him a place unchallenged and apart in his generation. Description is the charm of all his works, but their fascination is increased by an exquisitely vague melancholy, more sincere than Chateaubriand's, more frank and honest in its self-revelation. Indeed, in "Le Roman d'un enfant" he seems almost eager to lay before the world the progress of his soul from

[1] Loti is the pseudonym of Pierre Viaud, who was born in 1850, and has been connected with the navy since 1867. Chronology and scenes of his chief works: Aziyadé (Constantinople), 1879; Le Mariage de Loti (Tahiti), 1880; Roman d'un spahi (Algeria), 1881; Mon frère Ives (ocean and Brittany), 1883; Les Trois dames de la Kasbah (Algeria), 1884; Le Pêcheur d'Islande (Iceland), 1886; Madame Chrysanthème (Japan), 1887; Au Maroc (Morocco), 1890; Le Désert (Syria), 1895; La Galilée (Palestine), 1895. Partly autobiographical are: Le Roman d'un enfant, 1890, and Le Livre de pitié et de la mort, 1891.

Criticism: Lemaître, Contemporains, iii. 91; Doumic, Écrivains d'aujourd'hui; Revue bleue, February, 1895.

Protestant severity through Catholic beauty to pessimistic doubt, to the "horrible consciousness of the vanity of vanities and the dust of dusts."

This pessimism was not new, but in him first it revealed itself in a receptive sympathy for the rare and exotic experiences that his naval life brought to him in richer measure than had fallen to the lot of Bernardin or Chateaubriand; but neither of these writers shows Loti's delicate sensitiveness to exotic nature as it is reflected in the foreign mind and heart. What a strange yet what a real world he has conjured up for us in "Loti's Marriage," — Otaheite, that Eden of the senses, a veritable Isle of Avalon, where all seems joyous ease, where love is but the fulfilment of nature's law, and sin is unknown, because there is no ungratified desire! How sweetly simple, how morally infantile, is Loti's bride, Rarahu! And with what firm delicacy the author shows us how his hero has brought with him from our western world not only the burden but the dignity of a life of struggle with nature and self that drives him at last from dreamful ease to active life, grieved at heart but clarified in mind; for *this* may be sweeter, but *that* is higher.

Less vague but as strange is the devouring passion and tragic fatality of the Turkish "Aziyadé;" and this pessimistic determinism grows still deeper in "A Spahi's Romance," where Fatou-gaye is a true *bête humaine*, sunk in moral slumber or quivering with ferocious joys. Here the very landscape is cruel, sterile, desolating, hardly more barren beneath its blinding sun than the broad reaches of ocean, whose spirit, vast and indefinable, gives a unique charm to "My Brother Ives" and "The Iceland Fisherman," probably artistically his strongest works, severely simple in drama

and situation, but wonderful in the subtly conveyed sensations of Breton village scenes or of tropic and polar seas. Then follows "Madame Chrysanthème," that enigmatical little Japanese, so naïve in her unmorality, as incomprehensible and as fascinating as Fatou-gaye or Aziyadé, and inferior only to the incomparable Rarahu. It is astonishing how beneath the artist's hand the whole Japanese environment has become real, not externally in photographic pictures, but in its inner nature. Loti gives us the impression less of a country than of a life, a mode of mental and moral being unlike any we have known.

The means by which he produces these remarkable effects are, as with all great artists, extremely simple. The style is direct, the vocabulary small, the moral situations familiar, the characters not complex. But this very simplicity strikes the key-note of the semi-civilization he describes, and aids that approximation of the primitive and the present, of our complexity with their simplicity, that gives Loti's work its peculiar charm. But his place is unique, apart from the normal lines of novelistic development. He has no immediate literary ancestor, and he has no pupil worthy the name.

Bourget[1] brings us back to the direct line of Nat-

[1] Born 1852. Poetry: La Vie inquiète, 1874; Edel, 1878; Les Aveux, 1882. Criticism and travel: Essais de psychologie, 1883; Nouveaux essais, 1885; Études et portraits (2 vols.), 1888, 1889; Psychologie de l'amour moderne, 1890; Sensations d'Italie, 1891; Nouveaux pastels, 1891; Outre-mer, 1895. Fiction: L'Irréparable, 1884; Cruelle énigme, 1885; Un Crime d'amour, 1886; André Cornélis, 1887; Mensonges, 1887; Le Disciple, 1889; La Terre promise, 1892; Cosmopolis, 1892; Un Scrupule, 1893; Steeplechase and Un Saint, 1894; Une Idylle tragique, 1896.

Criticism: Lemaître, Contemporains, iii. 339, iv. 291; Doumic,

alistic decadence. He carries realistic observation beyond the externals that fixed the attention of Zola and Maupassant to states of the mind, and thus strives to unite the method of Stendhal to that of Balzac. Indeed it is to him and the psychological school that has gathered around him that Stendhal owes his renascent fame. Bourget began his literary career as a reviewer. A volume of verses published at twenty-two earned him from Émile Augier the name of "melancholy pig," but a few years later he reappeared with riper mind and to far better advantage in literary essays on the writers who had most influenced his own development, — the philosophers Renan, Taine, and Amiel; the poets Baudelaire and Leconte de Lisle; the dramatist Dumas *fils*, and the novelists Turgenieff, the Goncourts, and Stendhal. Here a studious disposition and the complete control of very varied and wide reading stood him in good stead; but these qualities that won him critical recognition militated against his success as a novelist or poet, for in these fields creative imagination was demanded rather than scholarly analysis.

Bourget calls himself "a moralist of the decadence," and again "a maniac of psychology and a passionate lover of analysis." But if he has been a moralist, he has, at least until very recently, set up no claim to be a reformer. His diagnosis has been brilliant, but he offered no balm for the wound he probed. Thus his criticism showed the blight that Renan and the dilettante skeptics cast on all who fell under their shadow. His fiction bears first strong, then feebler

Écrivains d'aujourd'hui; France, La Vie littéraire, i. 348; Pellissier, Essais de littérature contemporaine, 221; Deschamps, La Vie et les livres, 61; Revue bleue, June, 1894, and March, 1895.

marks of Renan's influence. An English reviewer has called it "a seductive if somewhat sickly product of the hot-house of an outworn civilization." It unites intellectual keenness with a morbid sensitiveness and an imagination that loves to twine itself in the rosy bonds of "Les Liaisons dangereuses." La Clos, as Doumic says, is Bourget's breviary. His work deals almost exclusively with high-life, chiefly of Paris, but also of those cosmopolitan types that he studied in visits to Italy, England, and America. At first there was certainly no small dose of snobbishness in the delight with which he gloated over the details of luxury, over silk stockings, wondrous in woof and shade, and the various patterns of a *corsage*. Latterly he has grown aware of this error of taste, and in the "Psychology of Modern Love" more than once makes fun of his former work; but possibly the *blagueur* is less sincere than the snob. "Mensonges" marks the cardinal point in his fiction. Up to that time he had seen environment more clearly than characters; here the dominant interest is morbid psycho-pathology, and from this point on his characters become more and more, like Stendhal's, "different" from normal clay. Bourget wishes to satisfy Taine's demand, to make the novel a document of moral history; but like him he finds the abnormal most significant. This, however, is true for fiction only so long as the characters retain an independent will. Men such as Larcher and Neyrac[1] are wearisome to any but an alienist.

In their ethics all but his most recent novels are profoundly pessimistic. The triumph is with cynical selfishness. Common-sense morality does, indeed,

[1] Larcher in "Mensonges" and "Psychologie de l'amour moderne;" Neyrac in "La Terre promise."

occasionally find a voice in this psychological wilderness, as when in "Mensonges" Madame Moraines with her "lover for money, her lover for love, and her lover for show," having been described by the future psychologist of modern love as "a complicated sort of animal," the Abbé answers: "Complicated! She is just a wretch who lives at the mercy of her sensations. All that — it's just dirt." And lest we should misapprehend the lesson we are given a glimpse of how it all came out in "Modern Love." The lady has changed lovers but not manners, the lover is resigned to his bonds, and *Monsieur qui paye* is enjoying a green old age, frosty but kindly, the friend of everybody. Maupassant's pessimism had been deeper, more sombre and earnest. This has a false note of flippant cynicism that prepares the reader for the alleged conversion announced in "Cosmopolis," and continued through the "Sensations d'Italie" and the "Nouveaux pastels," where Bourget has fallen in with the wave of popular reaction toward religious sentiments and curiosity, if not precisely toward Christian creeds, that has come to France from the Russians, has recently shown itself also in Daudet's "Petite paroisse," and has won the critical sympathy of Brunetière;[1] but there is always a false note in Bourget's Catholicism, a savor of the sensuous mysticism of Baudelaire.

Intent as Bourget always seems on catching and conveying "states of soul," his style is apt to reflect the quality of its subject. It is extremely uneven, now simple, now mannered to the verge of affectation, sinking at times to careless solecisms, but capable of rising, on occasion, to a terse and nervous concision

[1] See his pamphlet "La Science et la religion" (1895).

that unites in singular measure strength and beauty.[1] In this, as in much else, he stands in close relation to his literary godchild Barrès, at the protracted birth of whose reputation Bourget actively assisted.

Maurice Barrès[2] represents a movement among the literary pessimists to throw off the moral lethargy of Renanism. That his effort was a partial failure does not detract from its significance, and it has not been without influence on the considerable section of "Young France" that is deaf to the voice of the Neo-Christian altruists. For, with a desire not uncommon in this restless generation, to find a new path and invent a new shibboleth, he has proclaimed his "cultus of the ego," the doctrine of individualism, which, he tells us in the preface to "Berenice's Garden," we must guard from philistine intrusion, recreate daily, and direct in harmony with the universe. Is Barrès in earnest or is he mocking his readers when he calls his novels "spiritual memoirs," and asks "why a generation disgusted with much, perhaps with everything except toying with ideas, should not try metaphysical romances"? Surely charity bids us take him for a laughing philosopher when he brings his fair promises to the lame conclusion that to expand with sincerity souls must have leisure, and hence that the pursuit of wealth is for the present the suitable attitude for "spirits careful of the inner life." But whether one sees in him a Democritus or an impassioned ideologue, his style is so uneven and his manner so obscure

[1] Cp. Lemaître, l. c. p. 339.

[2] Born 1862. Journalist since 1883. Essays: Sensations de Paris, 1888; Le Quartier Latin, 1888; Huit jours chez M. Renan, 1888. Fiction: Sous l'œil des barbares, 1888; Un Homme libre, 1889; Le Jardin de Bérénice, 1890. Drama: Une Journée parlementaire, 1894.

that he teases curiosity far oftener than he rouses admiration.

Bourget has several other followers as talented and more intelligible in developing the psychological side of Naturalism. Of these, one may distinguish Rosny, a deserter from the banner of Zola, and as yet a writer of more promise than performance, and Rod, a Swiss, who perhaps excels any of the school in delicacy of feeling and subtilty of analysis. He has defined his ethical position by the remark that what consoled him for being born in the nineteenth century was the thought that he might have been born in the twentieth. Here, too, may be reckoned Ricard for his "Sœurs" (1893), one of the strongest novels that this group has produced; and on its outer confines is Rabusson, diligently applying the methods of Bourget to the subjects of Feuillet;[1] but it seems already clear that the great promise of the new school lies in Prévost and Margueritte.

Marcel Prévost,[2] the youngest of the novelists now much in view, seemed at first the most hopeful pupil of Bourget, till he discovered himself as his chief rival, making shrewd use of the psychologist *camaraderie*, but freeing himself speedily from the trammels of literary coteries and theories, and now bent rather on following than on guiding the currents of intellectual life. So when in "Conchette" he urged the claims of Romanticism, asserting that "the positive and the

[1] Rod (b. 1857) is criticised in Revue bleue, January, 1895; Rabusson (b. 1850), in Lemaître, Contemporains, iii. 115, and Houssaye, Les Hommes et les idées, p. 287.

[2] Born 1862. Fiction: Le Scorpion, 1887; Chonchette, 1888; Mlle. Jaufre, 1889; La Cousine Laure, 1890; La Confession d'un amant, 1891; Lettres des femmes, 1892; Nouvelles lettres des femmes, 1893; L'Automne d'une femme, 1893; Demi-vierges, 1894.

Romantic novel were only two expressions of the same reality," he was no prophet crying in the Naturalistic wilderness as he would have been ten years earlier, but rather a sagacious prognosticator of a popular favor, already weary alike of aristocratic "states of soul" and plebeian states of life. He was not disposed, however, to sacrifice his growing popularity to this, or indeed to any literary theory, proposing to himself for the present no higher aim than to amuse the public and himself,[1] and to this he has remained faithful, posing no longer as a moralist,[2] but rather as a keen *blagueur* of society, an amateur collector of the distortions of love. There is in all his books the standing contrast between the man in whom love becomes a senile weakness and him in whom it remains a physical function. Amadou, Louiset, Maxime de Chantel, Frédéric, are dragged down by it morally and intellectually. Moriceau, Clæys, Hector Le Tessier, O'Kent, cynics all, are suggested for admiration and imitation; and the last of these sums up the new world-wisdom in the dictum that "love has no intrinsic morality, is neither noble nor shameful, but purely selfish."

The interest of Prévost's work lies almost wholly in analysis of the feminine mind, and finds its extreme flowering in the "Lettres des femmes" and in "Demi-vierges." He is always clever in conception, skilful in construction. His style is easy and flowing, but yet characterized by a singular combination of simple sentiment and graceful delicacy with astonishing *tours de force* in brutality of expression. There is a ten-

[1] Preface to "Cousine Laure."

[2] In "Demi-vierges" he does indeed pose as a moralist once more, *but it is* as a moralist *pour rire*.

dency to redundancy and repetition, and, as in so many men of talent in this generation, there is occasionally an undeniable slovenliness of diction, probably the result of over-hasty production. There are graver faults than these, however. The brilliancy of his analysis often masks faulty assumptions; his characters act from strained or insufficient motives; his women are too neuropathic to rouse a sympathetic interest. They are too irresponsible, too much the creatures of their emotional instincts, the instruments of nature, without discipline or morality. This moral pathologist ignores all healthy states. Of a helpful marriage of true minds, the novels of Prévost make no mention and take no heed. He is the brilliant but morbid and sterile representative of a decadent literary movement, not the virile sower of the future's seed.

Paul Margueritte[1] had a less promising literary birth, but a much more healthy development. His early work was naturalistic *à outrance*. No writer of that school has been more minute than he in observation and description of the details of every-day actions. At first he sometimes abused this talent, descending to Rabelaisian details and episodes of Saphism that go about as far in the analysis of dirt as it is granted to any writer to penetrate who does not leave his æsthetic sense behind. His early work shows also a disposition

[1] Born 1860. Son of the general whose heroic death at Sedan is commemorated in Zola's "Débâcle." Fiction: Mon père, 1884; Tous quatre, 1885; La Confession posthume, 1886; Maison ouverte, 1887; Pascal Gafosse, 1889; Jours d'épreuve, 1889; Amants, 1890; La Force des choses, 1891; Sur le retour, Le Cuirassier blanc, 1892; Ma grande, 1893; La Tourmente, 1894; Fors l'honneur, 1895; Simple histoire (Nouvelles), 1895.

Criticism: Pellissier, Littérature contemporaine; Lemaître, Contemporains, v. 30.

to introspective revery; but in later books these tendencies are restrained by a riper mind and clarified by a cleaner taste, and his art is dignified by a higher purpose and a deeper sense of the responsibilities of literature to morals.

With this growing seriousness his work becomes more attractive, but his style continues restless, nervous, uneven. It proceeds by fits and starts, suggests the eager searcher rather than the confident guide, though it flashes often with penetrating observations. Margueritte feels profoundly the unsolved enigmas of life, but he has come to reject the sedative of pessimism. Haunted, as he tells us, by a sentiment of mystery from childhood, he has been one of the first to suspend judgment, has balanced for a time between an instinctive assertion of the will that characterizes all healthy youth, and a morbid wonder breathed from the miasma of his determinist environment that made him question at times whether we were not "involuntary actors and powerless witnesses of the slow indefinable evolution of ourselves."[1] But at his best and at last he has had the courage to proclaim that no one has a right "to leave a great responsibility to chance or destiny," that "the greatest misfortunes come from lack of will;"[2] and in those words he has found the disease and shown the remedy for the neuropathic culture of modern France.

It is inspiriting to see this son of one who won immortal renown by a glorious death, enfranchising himself by the power of his own genius from mental anæmia and moral lethargy. His "Pascal Gavosse" ends with a call to work. "Jours d'épreuve" in its

[1] Alger l'hiver, 1891.

[2] "Force des choses" and "Jours d'épreuve."

study of the humbler aspects of bourgeois life has laid aside Flaubert's contempt for Dickens' sympathy with that "lowly happiness, narrow and resigned but sure," despite poverty and disappointed ambition. "La Force des choses" is even more tonic in its healthy morality, and if in "Sur le retour" he has indeed returned to a more artificial psychology and tried to throw a new light on the old observation that "crabbed age and youth cannot live together," he recovers his healthier tone in "Ma grande," a sound, clean story of loving jealousy in which he has involved a delightful parody of the Symbolists. This same strong, hopeful note rings through his latest novel, "Fors l'honneur," and suggests the evolution from the present chaos of a new, profounder, purified realism from which shall spring a healthier literature than could have been hoped from debased Naturalists, intense Psychologists, canny Egoists, moon-struck Symbolists, or Bohemian Decadents.

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